

Vorontsov to meet ex-Afghan king

ROME (AP) — A top Soviet official arrived in Rome Friday to meet with the former king of Afghanistan, who has been mentioned as playing a possible role in a political settlement in his homeland. Yuri Vorontsov, a first deputy foreign minister who serves as the Soviet ambassador to Afghanistan, was scheduled to meet with the ex-king Saturday, a member of the Soviet delegation told reporters at Leonardo da Vinci airport. Vorontsov's visit to Rome came a day after he met in Moscow with U.S. Ambassador Jack Matlock. The Soviet news agency TASS, reporting on the meeting, said "during a thorough talk, the sides discussed specific aspects of creating appropriate conditions for forming an Afghan government on a broad basis." Former King Mohammad Zahir Shah, toppled in 1973 after a 40-year reign, has been talked about as playing some role in a transitional government when the 74-year-old ex-king has been extremely cautious in his public statements. In the past, he has called for the convening of an assembly of Afghan leaders to decide on a transitional government.

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Arafat: Pan Am crash 'inhuman act'

ROME (AP) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat Friday blamed terrorists for the crash of the Pan Am jetliner in Scotland, condemning it as an "inhuman criminal act" that undermines the peace process in the Middle East. At a news conference at the end of his one-day visit to Rome, Arafat made his first public comment on the crash of the Boeing 747 in Lockerbie, Scotland, that killed all 258 people aboard. "This is an inhuman criminal action which we condemn," Arafat said. "It is against our peace mission. It is not against a state, it is directed against humanity as a whole. It is another proof that we should all fight against this type of terrorist act. We join other nations in an effort to stop this terrorism and criminal act." Arafat said he was "very sad" because the Pan Am crash claimed the life of "one of my friends," referring to Berni Clarkson, the U.N. official involved in negotiations for independence of Namibia. "I send my heart-felt condolences to all the victims of this crime," Arafat said. Investigators suspect that the Pan Am plane may have been blown out of the sky by a bomb.

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AROUND THE WORLD...

Iraq: No new measures on Turkey-Mosul road

ANKARA (R) — The Iraqi embassy in Ankara said Friday that traffic was normal on the highway from the Turkish border to the oil city of Mosul to northern Iraq. The embassy in a written statement to Reuters said: "Iraqi military authorities are only carrying out their security duties. Apart from this there has been no new change carried out." The statement followed a Reuters report from Ankara Dec. 19 which quoted foreign travellers as saying Iraq had built a chain of fort-like army posts along the main road from the Turkish border to Mosul, 85 kilometres to the south.

Kenya resumes ties with Israel

NAIROBI (R) — Kenya has reestablished diplomatic relations with Israel following the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) decision to recognise the Zionist state, state-run Voice of Kenya radio said Friday. Kenya, along with most other black African countries, broke off diplomatic relations with Israel after the 1973 war in line with a resolution of the Organisation of African Unity. Despite the lack of diplomatic relations, Kenya and Israel have developed close ties in the last few years.

Sri Lanka to end state of emergency

COLOMBO (R) — The Sri Lankan government said Friday it would end a five-year state of emergency next month as part of new efforts to bring peace to the strife-torn island. National Security Minister Lalith Athulathududali made the announcement after the first cabinet meeting since last Monday's poll in which Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa was elected president. Athulathududali told a news conference the government was doing its best "to reach some peaceful adjustments" to the Tamil separatist revolt in the north and leftwing violence in the south.

Dali back in hospital

FIGUERAS, Spain (R) — Spanish surrealist artist Salvador Dali, 84, was back in hospital Friday after suffering a small haemorrhage, doctors said. They said Dali, who spent two weeks in hospital last month with serious heart and breathing problems, was taken to hospital to his hometown of Figueras overnight after vomiting blood. He would undergo tests for two to three days, doctors said.

Bomb threat on Air India Jumbo

LONDON (R) — A bomb threat caused an Air India Boeing 747 bound for New York to return to London's Heathrow Airport Friday, an airline spokesman said. About 30 minutes after the plane carrying 250 people took off, Air India's New York office received an anonymous telephone message that a bomb was aboard. The warning was radioed to the captain of Air India Flight 109 who decided to return to London, the spokesman said. The jumbo landed and taxied to an isolated area of the airport where passengers got out and the plane was searched. Earlier, one of the airport's terminals was evacuated for nearly an hour after the discovery of a suspect suitcase. A bomb disposal team later found it contained only clothes.

Shevardnadze visits North Korea

TOKYO (AP) — Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze has arrived in the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, last leg of a three-nation tour that included visits to Tokyo and Manila, the North's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported Friday. North Korean Foreign Minister Kim Yong Nam and other top government officials greeted Shevardnadze on his arrival Thursday night from Manila, the news agency said in a report monitored in Tokyo. KCNA said Shevardnadze was paying a "working visit" as an official state guest but provided no details on his agenda. Japanese government officials said he was scheduled to return to Moscow Saturday. Shevardnadze has said his visit to Pyongyang was intended to reaffirm traditional ties of friendship between the two communist nations.

Sweden deports Palme case Kurd

STOCKHOLM (R) — Sweden said Friday it would deport a Kurdish man formerly considered by detectives hunting the killer of Prime Minister Olof Palme to be a vital source of information. The Foreign Ministry said the Kurd, who was not named, was being extradited to West Germany, where authorities want to question him on a murder charge. It gave no other details. The man, a former member of the Kurdish separatist movement PKK, was regarded as a key informant in the Palme murder investigation when Swedish police were convinced the PKK assassinated Palme in February 1986. Police suspected Palme was assassinated in revenge for a decision by his Social Democratic government to brand the PKK a terrorist organisation. The PKK line of inquiry finally collapsed owing to lack of evidence and 20 Kurds who had been detained were released. Police last week arrested a lone Swede, a former mental patient with a record of violent crime, on suspicion of shooting dead the Swedish premier in central Stockholm.

Death hits Bangladesh peace efforts

DHAKA (R) — A tribal leader who played a key role in efforts to end a 15-year revolt in southern Bangladesh died Friday after being shot by a suspected left-wing guerrilla. Officials said they feared the death of Shantimoy Dewan, 62, would jeopardise recent progress in efforts to bring peace to the Chittagong hill tracts. Dewan was shot by a suspected "Shanti Bahini" (Peace Force) rebel in the hill tracts town of Rangmat Tuesday. He died in a military hospital in the southern of Chittagong, officials said. Dewan had acted as an intermediary between the government and guerrillas in the dense jungles of the hill tracts where 1,500 people have been killed since 1973.

Ibn Ali urges end to U.S.-Libya feud

TUNIS (R) — The Tunisian president Friday urged the United States to settle its dispute with Libya peacefully over Washington's allegations that Tripoli was producing chemical weapons, the official news agency TAP said. President Zine Al Abidine Ibn Ali told U.S. Ambassador Robert Pelletreau he hoped Washington would take Libya's denials about such a factory into consideration and that the dispute could be solved by peaceful means, it said. U.S. President Reagan said Wednesday that Washington was in contact with its allies about how to prevent Libya making poison gas. He did not rule a preemptive attack on a factory at Rabta, 60 kilometres from the Mediterranean coast (see page 2).

Rabbani to meet Iran-based rebels

ISLAMABAD (R) — Afghan rebel sources said Friday Burhanuddin Rabbani, current chairman of the Pakistan-based Afghan guerrilla alliance, left Friday for talks with rebels based in Iran. A guerrilla spokesman said Wednesday that a date and agenda for a second round of talks with the Soviet Union would be announced after Rabbani returned to Pakistan. The Iran-based guerrillas operate mainly in western Afghanistan, where much of the population belongs to the Shi'ite sect of Islam dominant in Iran. Members of the more powerful Sunni sect of Islam dominant in Pakistan are mainly Sunni Muslims.



King reviews anti-locust campaign

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein Thursday visited southern regions where he was briefed on progress of work (photo above) in efforts mounted to counter the threat of locusts (see story on page 31)

Recorders offer little clue to Pan Am crash

LOCKERBIE, Scotland (Agencies) — The cockpit voice recorder from a crashed Pan Am jumbo jet which killing at least 275 people ended with a faint, unidentified noise but showed no other signs of trouble, investigators said Friday. Department of Transport experts, analysing the Boeing 747's two flight recorders at Farnborough air base in southern England, completed the first playback of both cockpit and data recording recovered from the wreckage of the plane, a spokesman said. The tapes confirmed that the crew had sent an distress signals before the plane fell out of the sky in a hail of fire Wednesday and crashed on this Scottish town. The spokesman said there was "nothing abnormal on either tape prior to the abrupt cessation of signals." Preliminary run-backs of both... contain data which shows that the tapes ended abruptly with the aircraft cruising at 31,000 feet (9,500 metres), he said. But he said there was "a faint, unidentified noise," at the end of the cockpit tape which was being further analysed. There was no clue about the mysterious sound. Investigators said earlier there was no immediate evidence that a bomb caused the midair disintegration of the plane. In London, the U.S. embassy said in a statement the cause of the crash was still unknown. All 258 passengers and crew on the airliner were killed while wreckage and blazing fuel killed at least 17 people on the ground. Mick Charles of the Transport Department's air accident investigation branch told a news conference: "We have no evidence whatsoever yet of sabotage." He also said the investigation continued and that sabotage had not been ruled out as a possible cause of the Wednesday night crash, Britain's worst air disaster. Charles said the large spread of debris — some parts of the plane were found kilometres from Lockerbie — was "not unusual" because the plane was at an altitude of about 9,500 metres and winds were at 115 knots. About 70 bodies found by search parties still lay outdoors and about 80 were placed in a makeshift morgue in the town hall of Lockerbie, police said. The government Friday ordered a security review at all British airports, after commander George Churchill-Coleman, head of Scotland Yard's anti-terrorism squad, took charge of the London end of the investigation into suspicions a bomb was smuggled on the plane. West German police also were investigating. The flight originated in Frankfurt, West Germany, on a Boeing 727. It stopped in London, where passengers

mean continued stalemate on Middle East peace issues, as has been the case for the last four years. The major parties were forced into a coalition by the inconclusive Nov. 1 elections, which gave 41 parliament seats to Likud, 39 to Labour and the remaining 41 to smaller parties. Likud and Labour also had formed a coalition after indecisive election results in 1984. "The developments in the international arena and challenges we are facing, require us to bridge our differences to overcome the obstacles and dangers we face," Shamir told the Knesset, or parliament, in an hour-long speech. Shamir introduced his slate of

(Continued on page 31)

U.S. 'looking forward' to work with new Israeli government

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — The United States said Friday it welcomed the formation of a new Israeli government and looked forward to working with Israel in the quest for peace. "The United States welcomes the establishment in Israel of a new government of national unity," State Department spokeswoman Phyllis Oakley said at a news briefing. "The U.S.-Israeli relationship has been marked by frequent and close consultation and cooperation... we look forward to continuing this consultative process with our Israeli friends to strengthen further the enduring ties between our two countries and to advance the Middle East peace process," she said. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir won the backing of the

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(Continued on page 31)

Reelected Benjedid set to push reforms

ALGIERS (R) — Elected unopposed to a third five-year term, President Chadli Benjedid is likely to follow a strong showing at the polls with a renewed push for political reform in one-party Algeria, diplomats say. Benjedid, sole candidate of the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN), was reelected president in a nationwide ballot Thursday with the support of 81.17 per cent of those who voted. Although the result was never really in question, the size of Benjedid's fresh mandate is seen as strong endorsement of a political liberalisation programme he initiated after riots convulsed the country last October. Announcing the result Friday, the Interior Ministry said just over 89 per cent of Algeria's 12.7 million registered voters turned out to give their verdict on Benjedid. First official figures showed 10.6 million backed the 59-year-old president, the ministry said. Some 766,247 people voted against him and a further 264,834



Chadli Benjedid

around 98 per cent. Political analysts said the lower figures were a product of a form of Algeria "glasnost" or openness that has swept the country since October's anti-austerity riots in which at least 161 people were killed. "These figures have a ring authenticity about them. That will not be lost on Algerians," one North African political analyst said. "It (the vote) does not really enhance his status but it certainly does not diminish it either. I expect him to move quickly to build on the support," said another diplomat.

Pope calls for fair, just Mideast peace

VATICAN CITY (Agencies) — Pope John Paul told Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat Friday that Israelis and Palestinians had an "identical, fundamental right" to their own land but they must shun reprisals and extremism.



Pope John Paul II

In earlier meetings with Prime Minister Ciriaco de Mita and other Italian officials, Arafat, touring Europe to seek support for the newly-proclaimed Palestinian state, called for fresh United Nations initiatives to bring about an international Middle East peace conference. A Vatican statement said the Pope had agreed to the meeting because of Arafat's "constant desire for peace and the rights of peoples." The Pope also wanted to "encourage dialogue, the only way to seek an equal solution to the Middle East conflict, excluding every form of recourse to weapons and violence and above all, to terrorism and reprisals," it added. The Pope met Arafat and a four-member Palestinian delegation privately for 20 minutes. The Pope's first meeting with Arafat in 1982 caused an uproar in the international Jewish community. He told Arafat Friday he was profoundly convinced that both Israelis and Palestinians share "an identical fundamental right to their own homeland in which to live in freedom, dignity and security, in harmony with their neighbours." The statement included passages which suggested the Pope believed Israel should accept proposals for a Middle East peace conference and sees the PLO's recognition of Israel and renunciation of "terrorism" as positive steps. While giving the Pope a gift of a crucifix carved out of mother of pearl Arafat made a reference to the year-old uprising in the Israeli-occupied territories. "I bring you this crucifix even if I know that Christmas will be difficult to celebrate in Bethlehem this year," Arafat said. The Pope gave Arafat a book on the Vatican. Arafat earlier had talks with de Mita, Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti and Deputy Prime Minister Gianni De Michelis. His trip to Rome was his first to a European community country since the Palestine National Council (PNC) proclaimed an independent Palestinian state last month. "He (Arafat) again called for initiatives, above all in the framework of the United Nations, which can facilitate the resumption of the negotiating process and lead to the establishment of an international conference on the Middle East," a statement from de Mita's office said. Andreotti told reporters there had been no discussion during Arafat's talks with Italian leaders of Wednesday's Pan Am airliner crash in Scotland. The PLO Executive Commit-

tee will meet in Baghdad Saturday to discuss forming a government-in-exile, a PLO official said Friday.

Azzam Al Ahmad said the committee would discuss forming organisational, administrative and constitutional bodies for the independent Palestinian state proclaimed in November, the official Iraqi News Agency reported.

The Central African nation of Burundi and the Central African Republic said Friday that they had recognised the Palestinian state.

Yugoslav government spokesman Ivo Vajgl was quoted by Belgrade newspapers Friday as saying agreement to open a Palestinian embassy in Belgrade was reached in principle during Arafat's visit there this week. No date had been set for the embassy to open. The Palestinians are currently represented in Belgrade by a PLO mission.

Bethlehem flooded with Israeli troops on eve of Christmas

BETHLEHEM, occupied West Bank (AP) — Hundreds of Israeli army troops moved into Bethlehem Friday to guard against violence as pilgrims gather for Christmas celebrations. Holiday activities in this town of 35,000 were to be reduced from previous years in sympathy with the year-long Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories. Israeli troops took up positions on the roads into Bethlehem, in its central Manger Square and on roofs of the nearby market. The square is in front of the Church of the Nativity, which was built over the grotto where Jesus Christ was born. Helmeted soldiers manned roof-top machine-gun posts, and dozens of military jeeps and trucks clogged the Manger Square parking lot. Army officials declined to say how many soldiers were sent to the area. The underground leadership of the uprising has called on residents in the occupied territories to strike Saturday in remembrance of the Palestinians killed in the revolt. Most have been shot to death in clashes with Israeli troops. The strike was expected to close all shops and offices in the territories, including Bethlehem. But shops were open a full day Friday, instead of the limited 9 a.m. to noon (0700 GMT to 1000 GMT) hours that have been kept through most of the uprising. Stores were crowded in Bethlehem and in Arah Jerusalem, with some of the business from last-minute Christmas shoppers. There are an estimated 35,000 Palestinian Christians in the West Bank and Gaza and about 100,000 Arab Christians in Israel. Between 3,000 and 4,000 Western Christians also live in Jerusalem and surrounding areas. Merchants in Bethlehem said business wasn't very good. Khaled, 39, stood in his deserted clothes shop, and complained: "As you can see, Bethlehem is being reoccupied by the army. I see more soldiers than I saw in 1967 when we were first occupied. Now can people shop? They are afraid to leave their

homes." He asked that his family name not be used for fear of reprisal. In the centre of Bethlehem, slogans painted on the wall by uprising supporters said "Remain home on the 24th of December," and "Let's escalate the intifada." Elsewhere in the occupied lands, three Palestinians were shot and injured in clashes with soldiers, hospital officials said. A 14-year-old boy was shot in following Friday prayers in the Shati refugee camp in Gaza City. A 10-year-old boy was shot in the Nossairat refugee camp in the Gaza Strip and a seven-year-old boy was shot in Nablus, they said. Troops shot and wounded 10 Palestinians in scattered clashes in the occupied territories Thursday, doctors said. In the West Bank's largest city of Nablus, protests erupted after the army lifted a curfew early Thursday, ending six days of restrictions. Six people were wounded in the ensuing clashes with troops, including a 42-year-old woman shot in the arm.

SWAPO welcomes peace pact

LUSAKA (Agencies) — The Namibian nationalist group SWAPO Friday welcomed an accord for the independence of the South African-ruled country but criticised proposed cuts in the size of a U.N. election monitoring group. SWAPO said in a statement telefaxed from its headquarters in Angola that the U.S.-brokered peace pact signed between Angola, Cuba and South Africa Thursday was a milestone in the struggle for Namibia's independence. But the SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation) said calls for the reduction in the size of UNTAG, the U.N. military election supervisory team, would benefit South Africa which has ruled Namibia in defiance of the United Nations since World War II. "SWAPO is unhappy about the disquieting efforts by the United States and certain other permanent members of the Security Council to amend and weaken the U.N. plan for the independence of Namibia," it said. The five U.N. security council members are seeking to slash the

Chief Inspector Kierie du Rand said the unit would be phased out gradually starting April 1, the beginning of a seven-month transition process leading to elections for a Namibian national assembly. South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha said Thursday South Africa would not end its friendship with UNITA rebels fighting Angola's government, but will not violate the peace accord it has just signed. "I will be telling you a lie if I say to you that we can suddenly end our friendship with UNITA," he told reporters. "We will remain sympathetic towards that organisation. A friendship cannot be terminated in this manner," he added, referring to the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, which is also supported by the United States. "But at the same time I have made it clear that any assistance rendered to UNITA as from today contrary to the provisions to which we have agreed will be a violation of the agreement and we will not do it."

GCC cements Gulf peace, urges international conference

BAHRAIN (Agencies) — Leaders of the six-state Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) ended an annual summit Thursday pledging to consolidate the Iran-Iraq peace drive, safeguard free navigation in the Gulf and seek an international conference on the Palestinian question.

They endorsed Saudi-sponsored talks between the Soviet Union and Afghan rebels amid speculation that the Middle East oil giant was moving towards resuming diplomatic ties with Moscow after a 50-year break.

The four-day summit was attended by King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id of Oman, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah of Kuwait, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates and Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa of Bahrain.

They underscored their resolve to beef up collective defence capabilities and gave economic integration plans a shot in the arm with the so-called "Manama Declaration" calling for speeded-up efforts towards a Gulf common market.

The council reiterates its resolve to pursue efforts aimed at consolidating security and stability in the region in a way that would

guarantee the right to free navigation in the international waters and sealanes. The summit stated in a closing communique read by GCC Secretary-General Abdullah Bishara of Kuwait.

It said it backed efforts by United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar to promote a peace treaty between Iran and Iraq to formally end their eight-year-old war.

The summit appealed to the world to support the Arabs' quest for an international conference on the Palestinian question to pave the way for a lasting Arab-Israeli peace and an independent Palestinian state.

It said that the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) should take part in the proposed conference to be held under U.N. auspices, with the participation of the permanent Security Council members.

The summit expressed hopes that the U.S.-PLO dialogue will help bring about an international peace conference.

The communique said the leaders "viewed with confidence the future action aimed at implementing the economic agreement gradually so that the Gulf common market be broadened and economic development be accelerated."

Among new steps approved in that direction was one entitling GCC nationals to own shares in companies in any member country.

The GCC leaders called for an Arab League foreign ministers' conference in a new push to end Lebanon's 13-year-old civil war.

"In view of the constructive role that Egypt has been playing, the leaders of the GCC council support steps that will enable Egypt to shoulder its responsibilities in the Arab World," the communique said.

That was as support for Egypt's reinstatement into the 22-member Arab League, nearly a decade after its membership was suspended to protest its 1979 treaty with Israel.

Some Arab states led by Syria have opposed Egypt's readmission, even though most Arab states have restored relations with Cairo since an Arab summit last year gave the green light to allow Egypt back into the Arab fold.

But Syrian President Hafez Al

Assad Wednesday indicated that he may be ready to reconcile with Egypt following Saudi mediation. That would end a major split hindering Arab unity.

The GCC leaders pledged to abide by oil production quotas agreed by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) last November under an overall ceiling of 18.5 million barrels a day. The quotas take effect Jan. 1.

The communique urged other OPEC member states to observe their quotas, calling on non-OPEC oil exporters to cooperate with the group to trim production and boost sagging prices.

Excerpts

Following are excerpts from the final communique as issued Thursday in English by Bahraini information officials:

The Supreme Council studied the security situation in the region and developments of negotiations between Iran and Iraq to implement the U.N. Security Council Resolutions 598.

The council expresses satisfaction over the positive developments in the region represented in the ceasefire and the start of negotiations connected with Resolution 598 and appreciates the (U.N.) secretary general's efforts.

The council affirms the continuation of work with the international community, mainly the permanent member states of the U.N. Security Council, to fully implement the resolution.

(1) renews the determination to work in order to maintain security and stability in the region, to ensure the right of free navigation in international waters and sea lanes in harmony with the principles of international law and the U.N. charter, and on the basis of good neighbourliness, non-interference in domestic affairs, mutual respect and peaceful co-existence taken from the religious and heritage ties linking the region's states.

...Praising the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people in (Israeli)-occupied lands, the council affirms the support of the member states for the uprising with all available potential until the uprising's goals are achieved, and praised the decisions of the Palestine National Council in its emergency session in Algiers and the declaration of an independent Palestinian state.

The council supports the establishment of this state and expressed appreciation for the states that recognised it, urging the rest of the states to recognise the Palestinian state.



Israeli soldiers patrol Manger Square in Bethlehem in front of the Church of the Nativity

Palestinian Christmas: Sad, little town of Bethlehem

By G.G. Labelle
The Associated Press

BETHLEHEM, occupied West Bank — A small Christmas tree sits in Georgette Shatara's living room, but she says there will be no turkey dinner this year, yet alone the whole roast sheep that marked holidays past.

"You see the tree?" she asked. "I did it for my youngest. He begged and begged."

But Shatara had to tell eight-year-old Khader, who sat nearby in neat clothes but torn tennis shoes, that Santa Claus will not make a visit this year to the family's one-story stone house on a hillside in the town where the Bible relates that Christ was born.

After a year of the Palestinian uprising, many Christian families like the Shataras do not have the money or the spirit for a traditional Christmas celebration.

The shortened daily working hours and weekly general strikes have hit the economy hard. Violence has taken the lives of more than 340 Palestinians and wounded thousands of others. More than 20,000 have been jailed since the uprising started last December.

Leaders of the uprising also have declared a general strike for Christmas Eve, when Palestinian Christians used to crowd into Manger Square with thousands of tourists to watch the parade that led religious leaders to the Church of Nativity.

About 35,000 Palestinian Christians live in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Most are concentrated in Bethlehem, nearby Beit Jallah and Beit Sahur, and Ramallah north of Jerusalem.

The Shataras, Roman Catholics, used to celebrate Christmas by going to midnight mass, then having a Christmas dinner with as many as 50 relatives. The traditional menu included turkey, a roasted sheep, stuffed zucchini and sweets.

This year, dinner will be for just Mrs. Shatara, her husband, Issa, and their six children. It will be "nothing special," she said.

The 38-year-old Mrs. Shatara says the reason for a quiet Christmas is obvious: "Lots have been killed, many others arrested. There's no work, no money. There's no reason for Christmas."

Mrs. Shatara says her husband, 48, is a waiter in a restaurant in Arish, Jerusalem and brings home only about 10 shekels (\$2) a day since there are few diners and few tips.

Her oldest son, Joseph, 19, quit high school to try to supplement the family income, but has found no steady work.

"For the first time, there's no money for clothes for the children, for toys," she said.

The intifada, Arabic for uprising, was also brought home to the family 10 days ago when a 14-year-old cousin got caught up in a stoning incident and was arrested by Israeli soldiers. Mrs. Shatara said he was held three days and complained he was beaten.

She said the family would not go to midnight mass both because of the general strike and a lack of spirit.

"There's no joy in our house," she said. Others disagree with plans to drop Christmas rituals. Robert Elian, another Bethlehem resident, complained that Christians were becoming a beleaguered minority in the biblical city and should celebrate to assert their presence.

"All year, we've had days of sorrow. We need a day to smile," he said when Bethlehem's Palestinian officials announced last month that a traditional Christmas parade would be cancelled and the town Christmas tree would be without lights.

Israeli authorities are going ahead with plans to hold the usual ceremony on Christmas Eve in which the military administrators of the West Bank greet church leaders in Manger Square, near the grotto where Christ was born.

Israel also plans a Christmas Eve concert in Manger Square, featuring choirs from Spain, Switzerland and a U.S. ensemble.

Mrs. Shatara's 14-year-old daughter, Rania, said her biggest disappointment this Christmas is that she and her classmates at St. Joseph's School will not go caroling door-to-door as usual.

"Everyone will miss it," she said. Asked her wish for Christmas, Mrs. Shatara replied with the salutation.

"I hope that on this birthday of the prince of peace there will be peace for all of us," she said.

Arab League warns U.S. against Libya attack over chemical charges

TUNIS (Agencies) — The Arab League has voiced concern over recent U.S. allegations that Libya has built a chemical weapons plant and warned that a U.S. preemptive strike would be a mistake and an aggression.

The Arab League was responding to remarks by President Ronald Reagan, who indicated in a U.S. television interview that the United States and its allies might consider an attack on a factory at Rabta, 60 kilometres from the Mediterranean coast.

"The secretariat (of the Arab League) warns against any temptation for the United States to fall again into the mistake already committed, in April 1986," a league statement released in Tunis Thursday said.

On that occasion, U.S. warplanes bombed buildings in Tripoli and Benghazi, including the home of Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi, supposedly in retaliation for a bombing in West Berlin.

The Arab League noted that Libya had already denied possessing any chemical weapons. Israel's nuclear weapons were a far greater threat to life and the environment, it added.

Qadhafi denied the U.S.

charges Thursday. He said the plant alleged to be producing poison gas was turning out medicine and he warned Washington he was prepared to defend it against any U.S. attack.

Qadhafi, in an interview with French Television, said:

"First of all it's not a chemical weapons factory but a factory for medicines. These accusations are the fruit of terrorism by the Americans. Every time a country makes an advance in its industrial development they try to put on the pressure to stop it."

But he added that Libya was "putting a defensive system around the plant, and appealing to our allies in anticipation of any American aggression."

"If this aggression takes place, it will be against a civilian target and we will have to retaliate, and the whole world will know about it," Qadhafi added.

The Libyan news agency JANA reported Thursday that doctors, pharmacists, and nurses were preparing to stage a sit-in at the factory.

JANA quoted medical sources as saying: "This noble and civilised achievement will only be destroyed over our bodies."

Clovis Maksoud, the Arab

League's representative in Washington, said it was "not true" that Libya was producing chemical weapons.

"This atmosphere of creating a focus on Libya as a scapegoat may be an attempt, directly or indirectly, by the Israelis to shift from the central challenge of the peace offensive that the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) and the Arabs are undertaking," Maksoud told reporters.

He said the U.S. accusation "might give a prior pretext for those who want to strike at an Arab country in order to prevent the maturing of the moderating developments that are taking place in the Arab world as a result primarily of the Arab-PLO dialogue."

Reagan, in an interview broadcast Thursday evening on the ABC television network, said military action against the Libyan site has been discussed by the United States and its allies, but "that's a decision that has not been made yet."

White House spokesman Martin Fitzwater, asked about the president's remark, said, "the president was quite clear that military action is an option. We're not ruling it out."

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Vincennes offer still unfulfilled

WASHINGTON (AP) — Almost six months after the USS Vincennes shot down an Iran Air jet, the United States has not fulfilled an offer to compensate the families of the 290 people who died aboard the plane. State Department officials said Thursday, President Ronald Reagan offered to compensate the relatives of the Iran Air victims, but U.S. officials have rejected any scheme under which the money would be handed over to the Iranian government, which in turn is insisting that it handle the payments. "Our intention remains to make payments to the relatives without any money going into the hands of the government of Iran," said Ben Justesen, a State Department spokesman. "Once we have identified who should receive compensation, and in what amount, the administration will work in cooperation with Congress to determine whether existing statutory authority exists to make such compensation or whether specific authorisation is needed," he said, reading a statement.

Condition of Lahd better

HAIFA (R) — The condition of wounded Lebanese militia leader General Antoine Lahd has improved and a doctor at the hospital where he is being treated said on Thursday he should be released soon. "General Lahd is walking, talking, sitting and eating and we hope he will be discharged soon but cannot give a date," said Dr. Zvi Ben-Israhel, deputy director of Haifa's Rambam hospital. Lahd, 61, commander of the pro-Israeli South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia which operates just beyond Israel's northern border, was shot and wounded in an assassination attempt at his home in Marjayoun, South Lebanon, Nov. 7. SLA officers said the would-be assassin arrested on the spot was Suha Bishara, a young woman who was a secret member of the Lebanese Communist Party and had gained the confidence of Lahd's family.

Libya and Somalia sign treaty

BEIRUT (R) — Libya and Somalia have signed an economic and cultural treaty after talks in Tripoli between Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi and Somali President Mohammed Siad Barre. The official Libyan news agency JANA said Thursday the treaty was announced in a joint communique issued at the end of the talks. Siad Barre arrived in Libya Sunday and left on Wednesday. The agency said the two countries signed "a general treaty for economic, social and cultural cooperation aimed at enhancing cooperation." JANA quoted the communique as saying the two countries supported an independent Palestinian state as well as the Palestinian uprising. The statement vowed support for the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and "its struggle for liberation to establish the Palestinian state over all the land of Palestine."

Frenchman implicated in ship attack

PIRAEUS (AP) — A Frenchman killed in an attack on the City of Poros cruise liner last July has been implicated in the gun and grenade assault that left nine people dead and 98 injured, sources said Friday. The accusation against Laurent Vigneron, 23, is contained in the results of an investigation into the July 11 attack on the City of Poros, sources at the district attorney's office said. The bulky report, drafted by port authority officials, was handed to a district attorney Thursday. According to the sources that requested anonymity, the report states that Vigneron was one of two people identified by eyewitnesses as firing a weapon on the ship's sun deck as it steamed towards a suburban Athens marina after a day-trip through the Saronic Gulf islands. The report does not include any other evidence linking Vigneron to the attack, they added. A second man that took part in the attack against the ship's 471 passengers was identified as Mohammad Zozad, 21. According to the report, Zozad, a Lebanese national, was killed in an explosion aboard the ship, the sources said.

Most Israelis favour PLO talks

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Most Israelis support peace negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) despite their new "unity" government's pledge not to talk to the group, according to an opinion poll published Friday.

The poll by the Dahaf Institute published in Yedioth Ahronoth, Israel's biggest-selling newspaper, said 54 per cent of Israelis wanted their government to talk to the PLO if it lived up to its commitment to halt "terrorism."

They were asked: "On the basis of [PLO Chairman Yasser] Arafat's declarations in Geneva, and on condition he fulfills his promise to stop 'terrorism', are you in favour or against negotiations with the PLO?"

Fifty-four per cent of Israeli Jews questioned said they supported talks, 44 per cent said they were opposed and two per cent said they had no opinion.

The poll did not sample Israel's 650,000 Arab citizens.

Pollsters told the newspaper the results indicated a significant increase in the number of Israelis

willing to talk to the PLO. Israel's new "national unity" government formed Thursday vowed to crush the year-old Palestinian uprising in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip and to refuse talks with the PLO despite international pressure.

The United States opened talks with the PLO earlier this month after Arafat recognised Israel's right to exist, renounced "terrorism" and accepted U.N. resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Soviet call on Israel

Israel should use the example of its recent closer dealing with the Soviet Union to adopt a more constructive approach to Middle East peace negotiations, a senior Soviet official said Thursday.

Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Petrovsky praised an Israeli decision to return to the Soviet Union four men who hijacked a plane to Israel this month as well its dispatch of relief workers to help earthquake victims in Armenia.

"The Israeli leadership should adopt a sensible approach to the Middle East question," Petrovsky told a news conference. "We witnessed such a sensible approach with the hijack and Israel's response to the Armenian earthquake. I cannot see why the same kind of approach could not be applied to the Middle East."

Petrovsky said conditions for Middle East peace had greatly improved following Arafat's address this month to the U.N. General Assembly in Geneva and the U.S.-PLO talks.

"Israel remains the only obstacle," he said. "It should listen to world opinion as expressed in Geneva."

The Soviet Union broke off diplomatic relations with Israel during the 1967 war, but ties between the two countries have warmed considerably in recent months.

Each has had a consular delegation in the other country since last summer, nominally to deal with administrative problems.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel: 77311-19	
PROGRAMME ONE	
15:30	Korn
15:50	Programme review
15:55	Children programme
16:40	Educational programme
16:45	Circus
17:30	Educational programme
18:00	News summary
18:05	Message from Iraq
18:15	Arabic series
19:10	Local programme
19:40	Programme review
20:00	News in Arabic
20:35	Arabic series
21:30	Programme review
21:45	Local programme
23:00	News summary in Arabic
23:10	Arabic play
PROGRAMME TWO	
18:00	L'Affaire Saint Roman
19:00	News in French
19:15	UN DB Plus
19:30	News in Hebrew

20:00	News in Arabic
20:30	Paul Daniel Shaw
21:10	Alfred Hitchcock presents "Twist"
21:35	Saturday Variety Show
22:00	News in English
22:30	Feature film: "The Christmas Gift"
24:00	Varieties
01:00	Live transmission from the Vatican of Christmas Mass
PRAYER TIMES	
05:06	Fair
06:28	(Sunrise) Daba
11:35	Dhuhr
14:19	"Asi
16:42	Maghrab
18:05	Isa
CHURCHES	
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 637785	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440	

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757	Terzian Church Tel. 623360
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541	Anglican Church Tel. 625363
628545	Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261	St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771251
Armenian International Church Tel. 683326	Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811295
Rainbow Congregation Tel. 822605	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 815817, 821264
WEATHER	
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.	
It will continue partly cloudy to cloudy with a possibility for scattered rain especially in the southern part of the country and winds will be south-	

western moderate. In Aqaba, it will be partly cloudy, with a possibility for scattered rain. Winds will be moderate to fresh and seas calm.	Min. max. temp
Amman	5/11
Aqaba	11/21
Desert	4/12
Jordan Valley	10/20
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 10, Aqaba 21. Humidity readings: Amman 50 per cent, Aqaba 42 per cent.	
USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS	
NIGHT DUTY	
AMMAN:	
Dr. Tawfiq Qab'an	623029
Dr. Khalid Audeh	795392
Dr. George Al-Sabouni	804506
Dr. Tayseer Al-Sadi	777636
Firas pharmacy	661912
Ferdows pharmacy	718336

Al Aserna pharmacy	637055
Narimath pharmacy	636712
Al-Salam pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	649445
Shimsham pharmacy	637660
IRIBID:	
Dr. Ahmed Rashid	—
Al-Sharafa pharmacy	483238
ZARQA:	
Dr. Rafeh Atallah	—
Khalifeh pharmacy	985417
EMERGENCIES	
Civil Defence Directorate	661111
Civil Defence Immediate	630341
Civil Defence Emergency	109
Rescue Police	192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	198, 841228
Edmond Bank	783603
Highway Police	643402
Public Police	639141
Public Security Directorate	656000/685111
Hotel Complaints	668000

Price Complaints	661176
Water and Sewerage	897467
Complaints	787111
Amman Municipality	787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)	12
Overseas Calls	17
Central Amman Telephone	660127
Reports	623101
Abdullah Telephone Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680101
Jordan Electricity Authority	835615
Electric Power	648411, 636381
Company	06-5320
RJ Flight Information	06-5320
Queen Alia Intl. Airport	06-52000
HOSPITALS	
AMMAN:	
Hawelin Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalid Maternity, J. Amn.	642816
Akhleh Maternity, J. Amn.	642412
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Malthus, J. Amman	636140

Palestine, Shimsham	664171/3
Shimsham Hospital	669131
University Hospital	667274
Al-Muashar Hospital	666127/17
The Islamic, Abdali	664167/6
Al-Ahli, Abdali	664167/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen	777101/3
Al-Barbar, J. Ashrafiah	775111/26
Army, Marka	846111/15
Queen Alia Hospital	612349/51
Amal Hospital	674185
ZARQA:	
Zarqa Govt. Hospital	091983321
Zarqa National Hospital	091981117
(In Sama Hospital)	0919866732
IRIBID:	
Princess Basma Hospital	102127555
Greek Catholic Hospital	02127275
Ibn Al-Nafes Hospital	1021247101
AQABA:	
Princess Haya Hospital	031214111

Apple	500 / 400
Banana	350 / 300
Banana (Mukammal)	300 / 250
Beans	400 / 350
Cabbage	130 / 100
Carrots	260 / 240
Cauliflower	160 / 120
Cucumbers	230 / 180
Eggs	550 / 450
Eggplant (large)	70 / 50
Eggplant (small)	200 / 150
Garlic	270 / 200
Grapes	140 / 120
Lemon	230 / 180
Marrow (large)	100 / 80
Marrow (small)	150 / 100
Orange (French)	360 / 280
Orange (Shamouni)	330 / 260
Orange (local)	230 / 180
Onion (dry)	200 / 160
Pepper (hot)	300 / 250
Pepper (sweet)	300 / 250
Potato	240 / 200
Pumpkin	330 / 100
Mandarin	330 / 180



Her Majesty Queen Noor Thursday inspects a model of the Al Amal Home project. Also present is Princess Alia Al Faisal (Petra photo)

Queen Noor lays foundation stone for Al Amal Home

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Thursday laid the foundation stone for the Al Amal Home, a centre for the multi-disabled and was briefed on the different aspects of the project.

At the outset of the ceremony, General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS) President Abdulhadi Al Khateib delivered a speech in which he said the centre, to be built at Yajouz, was expected to accommodate 150 handicapped children aged between six and 20 years.

The centre, to be set up on an eight dunam land, will provide rehabilitation service, education and physiotherapy services to the handicapped children on a permanent basis, Khateib said.

To be accepted for treatment and rehabilitation, residents should be proved by examination to be mentally handicapped and suffer from one or more handicaps, while the centre will be supplied with equipment to help provide the essential services at a nominal cost, Khateib noted.

Multi-disabled children are currently being taken care of at a GUVS temporary centre located at Tiba Al Ali district.

GUVS, which is sponsoring the project, is now supervising the work of 30 local voluntary and charitable societies which help provide rehabilitation services to handicapped children, Khateib said in his speech.

He said these societies complement the work of the Ministry of Social Development in caring for the less fortunate children in the Jordanian society.

Other speeches were delivered by relatives of handicapped children and the head of Zarqa's GUVS branch.

Later, the Queen accompanied by Princess Alia Al Faisal and the minister of social development toured the site, inspected a model of the project and was briefed on the different stages of the project.

The total cost of the project is estimated at JD 450,000.

Seminar on development of badia region ends in Azraq

King Hussein: No aspirations, objectives should be abandoned

AZRAQ (Petra, J.T.) — A two-day seminar on the development of the badia (desert regions) of Jordan ended in Azraq Thursday, and the recommendations passed at the final session covered water, irrigation, agriculture, social services, mineral resources and the infrastructure in the badia region which forms more than 70 per cent of the total area of Jordan.

His Majesty King Hussein attended part of the final session which was held under the chairmanship of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and attended by Minister of Planning Tahir Kanaan, along with dignitaries from the badia region and senior officials.

King Hussein paid tribute to the teams involved in planning and implementing plans for the development of the semi-desert areas of the country and described the meeting as one more station in the long march towards progress.

The King referred to the numerous challenges and difficulties overcome by the Jordanian people over the years, and the many achievements realised through their dedication and hard work as well as serious endeavours, and said that more efforts are still to be exerted because no aspirations and objectives should be abandoned.

King Hussein referred to the meeting as a true manifestation of democracy where the people and government can meet and openly and frankly discuss matters of real interest for the country's development as well as serve national interest.

The King voiced appreciation to Prince Hassan and to all who contributed towards organising the seminar which, he said, aimed to develop a clear part of Jordan and help exploit latent potentials in the desert areas of the country.

Addressing the session later, the minister of planning reviewed the government's plans for the development of the badia region which, he said, forms 77 per cent of the total area of the country, containing 123 population settlements mostly bedouin tribes, and abundant with natural resources, underground and surface water areas still awaiting to be tapped.

Kanaan said that the badia region of Jordan is rich with cement, oil, oil shale, natural gas, phosphates, and offers a good chance to be developed and serve as pasture land where farming can flourish and where infrastructure projects and essential services such as electricity, health and education can be carried out.

Human resources

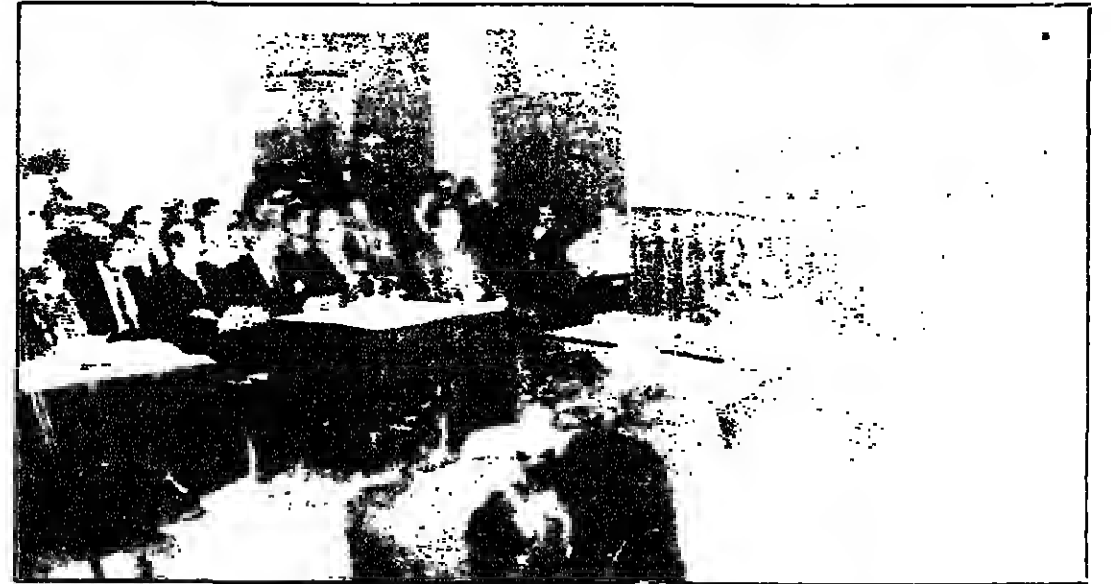
In the field of human resources and population, the seminar urged the government to boost efforts designed to provide data and information about the population that can help the process of development, such as conducting a general census and a survey of the existing settlements and families inhabited by the local population.

It urged the Ministry of Planning to draw up a general plan for the development of human resources in the semi-desert regions, aiming to attain higher standards of living for the inhabitants and provide essential services to them.

It said that the desert regions should be made to serve as an area that attracts settlers, provided with services and means enabling them to carry on their struggle to develop their region, especially in the sectors of agriculture and mineral resources.

The seminar urged the Ministry of Education to give further attention to the badia region through providing more qualified teachers, increasing scholarships for badia children who would be employed to serve their community after graduation and through vocational training programmes.

The seminar urged the concerned authorities to allow the youth who are required to do national service, to help in implementing projects for greening the desert as part of their service and build a green belt that can end the encroachment of desert lands on arable regions.



His Majesty King Hussein Thursday attends part of the final session of the badia development seminar in Azraq Thursday (Petra photo)

Agriculture and irrigation

In the field of agriculture and irrigation, the seminar called on the Ministry of Water and Irrigation to work in concert with the Ministry of Agriculture in helping the bedouin tribes exploit arable lands to provide water for the animals and livestock. It urged the Ministry of Agriculture to provide veterinary services to promote animal husbandry and to set up stations for the distribution of animal feed at subsidised prices.

The seminar pointed out that the local stock breeders were in need of barley, corn, bran, soya beans and water so that they can maintain their livelihood and develop their areas.

It called on the Ministry of Agriculture to help create pasture lands and the Ministry of Planning to help create local traditional crafts and benefit from wool and animal skin. It also called on the authorities to help facilitate the movement of bedouin tribes and their animals from and into desert lands of neighbouring Arab states.

The seminar urged the Ministry

of Agriculture to conduct studies on the soil to determine its eligibility for different types of crops once lands have been reclaimed for farming purposes, and to conduct studies on the expansion of pasture lands.

This, it said, can be promoted through coordination with technical teams and specialists from universities and other concerned departments.

The seminar called on the Ministry of Agriculture to build small dams in the wadis to provide water for animals and offer local stock breeders sufficient fertilisers, animal feed and advice.

The seminar urged the Ministry of Agriculture to set up permanent stations supplied with equipment and pesticides to help carry out major campaigns for spraying crops against diseases and combat dangerous insects such as desert locusts.

It also called on the ministry to open agricultural roads that can help transport animals from one district to another, and to set up resthouses for travellers in the badia regions.

The seminar recommended projects in electricity, education, health and other fields. It urged the Jordan Electricity Authority to supply badia villages with power and the Ministry of Health to provide more child and mother care services by establishing health and primary health care centres.

The seminar urged the Ministry

of Social Development to extend assistance to the needy families of the badia regions of Jordan and encourage voluntary societies to visit the badia region and plan projects for the local needy inhabitants.

The seminar referred to housing urging the Ministry of Housing to set up homes for employees especially teachers in remote regions and to include the badia within a national housing strategy.

Literacy centres

The seminar also urged concerned authorities to promote the role of bedouin women in the overall development process, by building literacy centres to provide education to adults and pave the way for women to embark on traditional crafts.

The seminar urged the Jordanian government to conclude agreements with the governments of Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Syria to organise the process of animal grazing in the border region and to step up efforts with these governments for the development of the Hammd region in the far eastern districts bordering on Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Syria.

The seminar urged the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company to work in conjunction with the Water Authority of Jordan in organising informational campaigns for the development of the badia region.

Lawzi receives university students

AMMAN (Petra) — A group of distinguished students from the University of Jordan Thursday had a meeting with speaker of the Upper House of Parliament Ahmad Al Lawzi and reviewed with him parliamentary life in Jordan and were briefed on the different activities of the house

and the law making process in parliament.

Lawzi spoke in detail about democratic and parliamentary life in Jordan over the years and the laws and legislations passed in parliament that helped to achieve progress and prosperity for the

Jordanian people.

Lawzi also spoke about Jordan's close links with the Palestinian problem and the Palestinian people, and the recent favourable developments that can help reestablish justice and peace in the Middle East.

Khayyat returns from Cairo meetings

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Aziz Al Khayyat has returned to Amman from Cairo where he took part in an international

seminar on demographic studies. The seminar tackled the world's population growth, birth control and questions related to birth and mortality rates around the world,

according to the minister. Khayyat said he also took part in a meeting of the board of directors of the International Islamic Centre on Population, organised by the Al Azhar University of Cairo.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

DAKHQAN MEETS U.K. ENVOY: Water and Irrigation Minister Ahmad Dakhqan Thursday discussed with the British Ambassador in Amman cooperation and coordination in water projects. (Petra)

KATHRABA ELECTIONS: Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and Environment Marwan Al Hmoud Friday announced that the Kathraba Municipal Council unanimously won the elections. He also announced the nominations of Abdul Salam Rashid Al Qaraleh as mayor to the prime ministry. (Petra)

MEETING TO DISCUSS LOCUSTS: Agriculture Minister Yusef Hamdan Al Jabr will meet with directors of agriculture departments Saturday to brief them on the latest measures the ministry has undertaken to combat desert locusts. (Petra)

THEATRE SEASON ENDS: The theatre season was concluded at the Royal Cultural Centre Thursday. The Culture and National Heritage Ministry Secretary General, Dr. Hani Al Amad, said four plays were presented in December. The ministry intends to hold the poem and poetry season, the hunk season, and the plastic art season which Her Majesty Queen Noor will open Wednesday. Amad said. These seasons are designed to reactivate the cultural movement, he added. (Petra)

CULTURAL WEEK IN OMAN: Jordan's Ambassador to Oman Samir Al Hmoud Thursday discussed with Omani Minister of National Heritage and Culture Faisal Ibn Ali Al Said means to bolster cultural relations. They also discussed the possibility of holding a Jordanian cultural week next year coinciding with Oman's National Day celebrations. The Omani minister welcomed the idea and recalled the successful Omani week that was held in Jordan in 1985. (Petra)

ART EXHIBITION OPENS: Under the patronage of Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Royal Jordanian Ali Ghandour, a two-week exhibition of paintings by Jordanian artist Farouk Lambaz was opened Thursday at the Alia Art Gallery. The exhibition includes 39 works depicting desert life and natural scenes from Jordan. (Petra)

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ An art exhibition by Friends of Plastic Art in Gulf countries at the National Gallery.
- ★ The youth's art exhibition which displays 101 paintings showing the different aspects of social life in Jordan at the Spanish Cultural Centre.
- ★ An exhibition of works by Contemporary Arab Artists at Al Wasiti Art Gallery.
- ★ An exhibition of paintings by Jordanian artist Farouk Lambaz at Alia Art Gallery — 5:30 p.m.

LECTURE

- ★ A lecture by Dr. Mohammad Abu Hanan on contemporary international society problems at Abdou El-Moud Shoman Foundation — 6:00 p.m.



Outgoing Australian envoy honoured

Australia's ambassador to Jordan Terence Goggin was honoured at a ceremony held at the Amman Plaza Hotel Thursday on the conclusion of his tour of duty in Jordan. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Marwan Al Qasem hosted a lunch in Goggin's honour and presented him with a token gift. Qasem delivered a short

speech in which he paid tribute to the ambassador for his efforts to promote and bolster Jordanian-Australian ties in all fields. Attending the lunch with Goggin, who served as ambassador here since 1986, was a group of heads of diplomatic missions in Jordan (Petra photo)



Rawabdeh receives Birmingham City shield

Greater Amman Mayor Abdul Ra'uf Al Rawabdeh Thursday received the shield of the English city of Birmingham during a meeting with the municipality with a team representing the city's boxing club. Rawabdeh briefed the team on the capital's development and programmes for expansion. He also presented the visitors with Amman's shield.

Recorders offer little clue to crash

(Continued from page 1) and luggage moved to a Boeing 747 for the continuing flight to New York.

The plane crashed just under an hour after leaving London. While no hard evidence of a bomb emerged immediately, U.S. officials said they had been warned two weeks ago that "terrorists" were plotting to attack Pan Am's Frankfurt-New York route during the month of December.

An anonymous telephone caller to the Associated Press office in London said the "Guardians of the Islamic Revolution," a pro-Iranian group, sabotaged Flight 103 in revenge for last summer's mistaken downing of an Iranian Airbus with 290 people on board by the U.S. missile cruiser Vincennes.

Iran has strongly denied any involvement (see page 2).

U.S. 'looking forward'

(Continued from page 1)

ministers to a full house of legislators by calling peacemaking a "first and foremost objective." He urged Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip to end their year-old uprising "to create conditions for a peaceful coexistence, freedom and prosperity for you and your children."

But Shamir again ruled out talks with the PLO and said any peace talks should be based on the U.S.-brokered Camp David accords of 1978.

Shamir in his speech urged the United States to reverse its decision to open talks with the PLO.

The foreign policy guidelines adopted by the coalition include rejection of the establishment of a Palestinian state in the occupied lands. They call for five to eight new Jewish settlements to be built in the occupied territories next year.

Al Hussein visits regions invaded by locusts

AMMAN (Petra, J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein Thursday made an inspection tour of the Sabab and Wadi Hamad regions in south east Jordan, the scene of desert locust invasion and was briefed on the situation there.

King Hussein urged the concerned teams to exert more efforts to rid the region of the dangerous insects and praised the different organisations and government departments involved in the locust-fighting operations.

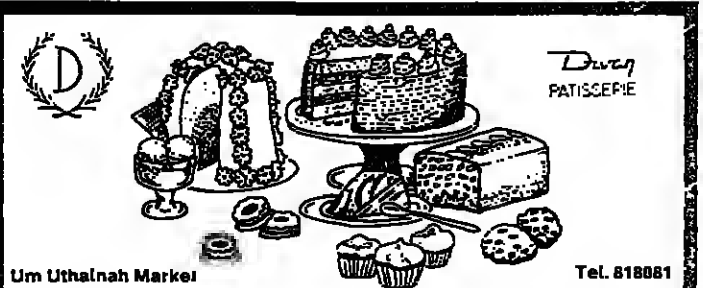
The commander of the Border and Badia Police Force briefed the King on the current campaign to eliminate the insect which invaded Jordanian territory from neighbouring

Saudi Arabia, and the continued coordination among the teams from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Armed Forces and the Badia Force in combating the pest.

The Ministry of Agriculture is spearheading efforts in the current campaign and has involved 20 ground teams supplied with equipment, vehicles and pesticides to carry out the task.

King Hussein paid tribute to the troops and local inhabitants who are involved in the fight against locusts.

He was accompanied by Chief of the Royal Court Sharif Zaid Ibn Shaker and the commander of the Royal Jordanian Air Force.



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Pastries	5.000 JD/box (34-50 pieces)
Mixed cakes	7 JD/box 160 pieces
Pastries (pizza Spinach meat)	100 lbs/box
Tamr (raisins) apples and fresh fruits	4.500 JD
Pies (apples, chocolate seasonal fruits)	4 JD
Cheese cake	6 JD
Chocolate cakes (chocolate pistachios, mousso)	6 JD
Strawberry cake (fresh strawberries all year round)	7 JD
Other kinds (charlotte, lemon, fresh fruits)	4.500 JD
Ice cream cakes	4.5 JD/box
Ruoco	6 JD
Arabic sweets	4 JD/box (45 pieces)
Pastiches	3.500 JD/box (45 pieces)
Waffles	3 JD/box (50 pieces)
Dates	3 JD/box

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Jordan Times

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Prepare for the worst and hope for the best

THERE are many important lessons to be drawn from the cataclysmic earthquake that pulverised the Armenian Republic in the Soviet Union and devastated the rural and urban areas in that region on Dec. 7. Above all it was the human dimension which caught the attention and concern of the whole international community. As the year 1988 draws to a close the images and voices of the dead and injured in the aftermath of the horrendous tremor would continue to haunt man's feelings, emotions and thoughts for many years to come.

And now that weeks have passed since the Armenian earthquake has struck, concerned people are searching through the rubble and ashes for answers and possible preventive measures that could be introduced to alleviate the sufferings that could ensue from natural disasters. Such concerns are equally relevant for us in Jordan as well, where there is a growing concern that our country and people may not be immune from this type of natural disasters as we would like to believe. As the Department of Seismology at the Natural Resources Authority (NRA) has confirmed recently Jordan and the area around it have a history of earthquakes dating back 4000 years, with the last major earthquake occurring in July 1927. From a geological point of view the situation in Jordan is very similar to that in California with the marked difference lying in the speed of the two geophysical movements in the Jordanian region. NRA authorities confirm. While it is most comforting to note that the NRA has started to monitor geophysical movements in our region back in 1983 and is now operating eight monitoring stations scattered around the Kingdom — soon to be increased to 30 — there are still measures yet to be taken in view of the experiences gathered in the aftermath of the Armenian earthquake.

Over and above the need to have the Civil Defence authorities be better prepared for any eventuality in the form of an earthquake that could hit us any moment, it would be sane and reasonable to start articulating and formulating new guidelines for construction in Jordan. One of the principal factors that lead to the very high human toll in human casualties in the wake of the Armenian earthquake was the kind of construction used in the region affected by the earthquake. It has become evident now that had the construction code in the urban areas of the Soviet Republic of Armenia been more geared to cope with possible earthquakes, as is the case in California, the damage could have been reduced considerably and the human casualty list would have been cut by more than half. That is why we in Jordan must begin to think about the unthinkable and prepare our urban areas to the worst scenario possible, by issuing new guidelines for all future construction schemes in the country. While the NRA is telling us that it is difficult to make predictions as to whether or when Jordan could witness a major earthquake, they are nevertheless warning us that an earthquake could occur tomorrow or not for the next fifty years. But strike us at one time or another it will. Let us be prepared for the worst and hope for the best.

ARABIC PRESS EDITORIALS

TWO Jordanian dailies Friday tackled the situation in the occupied Arab territories in the light of the new Israeli coalition government.

Al Ra'i said that one of the cabinet members Moshe Arens has stated his intention of persuading the U.S. administration to give up the idea of a dialogue with the PLO which, he claimed, can not be conducive to peace. Another member of the new cabinet Shimon Peres called for finding a substitute for the PLO from among the Palestinian people living under Israeli rule, the paper added. It asked that both statements point to one direction: that the new government in Israel is oriented against the peace process and will do all it can to abort any moves for a U.S.-PLO understanding on an international conference that would pave the way for a lasting peace. In the light of this situation, the paper said, the Arabs should intensify their efforts worldwide to thwart Israel's moves and should back the Palestinian people's uprising with all available means so that the Palestinians can resist all Israeli pressures and maintain the struggle for freedom.

The editor of Al Ra'i daily Rakan Al Majali writes Friday on the appointment of Moshe Arens and other hawks in the Israeli government and says it was a clear gesture that the new coalition will fight peace. The appointment of Moshe Arens as foreign minister indicates that the new cabinet plans to carry the fight against the idea of peace to the international arena and the appointment of Yitzhak Rabin as minister of defence shows that the government wants to maintain its iron fist policy against the Palestinians on the domestic front, the writer notes. Majali points out that no matter how different to the outside world, the two Israeli parties the Likud and Labour might seem, they are in fact two faces of the same coin and are bent on implementing Zionist strategies one way or another. By rejecting to talk to the PLO and the idea of a PLO-U.S. dialogue, Israel is telling the whole world that it refuses to implement U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 through an international conference and rejects the idea of peace in the Middle East, the writer continues. He says that the formation of an Israeli cabinet of this nature is a clear manifestation of the evil nature of the Zionists who are at the helm of power in Israel today.

Al Dustour daily dwelt on the same subject and said that it was natural for the Likud and Labour to form a coalition government since they are no different from one another in terms of aggression on the Arabs and are indeed in alliance to thwart any attempt to reach peace in the Middle East. There was no alternative for the two parties in the face of the mounting world pressure but to join hands and pool their resources in the fight against world pressure in an attempt to undermine the PLO-U.S. dialogue that could lead to peace, the paper noted. It said that there can be no doubt now that the so called hawks and the doves of Israel wear the same feather and aim to carry out the same racist and fascist policies to serve the world Zionist movement.

France not quite ready to pack up despite Chad-Libya detente

By Jean-Loup Fievet
Reuter

N'DJAMENA — Each day at dawn French-marked Mirage jets burst into N'Djamena's dusty skies in a deafening aerial ballet as they set out for routine surveillance flights over the Chadian desert.

Fifteen months after Chad and Libya agreed to a truce in their border dispute, France still offers its mighty shield to this vast central African nation ravaged by decades of civil strife and war.

But last week, after talks with Chadian President Hissene Habre in Morocco, President Francois Mitterrand said France would scale down its costly military presence in its former colony.

The current rapprochement between Chad and Libya allows a reappraisal of the French military presence, but in any case the core of the Epervier (Sparrowhawk) operation will remain.

France's top military commander in Chad, air force Colonel Hughes Poncet, said in a recent interview with Reuters.

Sparrowhawk is the code-name of a sophisticated air defence system backed with ground troops France sent to Chad in 1986 to counter a threat to the north of the country from Libya.

French sources say Epervier still costs about \$5 million a month.

Chad and Libya, at odds over the Aouzou strip, a stretch of desert border, last year signed a ceasefire agreement after the Chadian army drove Libya out of northern Chad.

"We are here at Chad's request and any change in our mission will have to be endorsed by both governments," Poncet cautioned.

Mostly professional airmen and soldiers which includes the elite foreign legion.

Radars and a dozen Mirage F1-C fighters, protected by U.S.-made Hawk and French-made Crotale ground-to-air missiles are based in N'Djamena and Abeche, 600 kilometres to the east near Sudan. A year ago French military engineers rehabilitated Abeche's runway to accommodate modern jets.

Western diplomatic and military sources in N'Djamena, Chad's capital, said France, apparently unmoved by Libya's peace overtures towards its neighbour, would not pull out in haste.

They have withdrawn before, in 1984, when France and Libya agreed to a mutual pull-out from Chad. In August 1983 France had sent some 3,200 troops to support Habre against Libyan-backed rebels.

Paris rushed its forces back in early 1986 when Libya attacked Chadian garrisons and bombed N'Djamena airport.

"The events of 1984 have left sore memories and France will not allow its military presence to be used as a bargaining chip in peace talks between Chad and Libya. The two issues are quite separate," a diplomat said.

Chadian officials, obviously wary about Libya's real intentions, reacted angrily to a recent French radio report of an imminent French withdrawal after Chad and Libya restored diplomatic ties in October.

A visit to N'Djamena by the French chief of staff General Maurice Schmidt was unexpectedly cancelled.

Habre was quick to stress that detente with Libya did not equal peace and accused Libya of rearming despite the year-long truce. "For the time being the French military presence is fully

justified," he told journalists.

As a first step in reducing this presence France will remove a powerful radar at Moussoro which it set up to protect the capital, some 250 kilometres to the south, against air raids, French military sources indicated.

In Morocco, Socialist Mitterrand disappointed Habre by saying he would cut a project to build a third military runway at

Faya Largeau, Habre's home town. It had been promised earlier this year by the conservative government of then French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac.

Some 100 French soldiers — mostly mechanics assisting the Chadian army — are based at Faya Largeau, a strategic oasis 800 kilometres north of N'Djamena freed by government troops in 1987 after a four-year Libyan occupation.

Bylines for the young

By Ibrahim Abu Nab

A FRIEND of mine who happened to be gasping for a breath of fresh air wrote recently in one of the Arabic dailies about the discrepancies in our midst. He observed three such discrepancies in just one sitting. Others may not afford such a leisure even if the contradictions in our society hit them right between their eyes. They have no time nor inclination for observing.

But that is what a columnist is for: To bend people's arms by the power of the word to make them see what they cannot see by the power of the sword. The word, if used properly, is more powerful than the sword.

My friend noted that some local papers publish sample questions and answers for the benefit of would-be graduates of Jordanian secondary schools. When that dirty old habit started in the press, he says, it was not primarily for the benefit of students, but rather for the benefit of the paper's own circulation. But now that papers are well established and no longer hard pressed for readers, they keep doing the same thing because students would not buy papers otherwise. So where do we go from here? My friend says: Do ask the teachers why are their students so thirsty for learning.

On the other hand, a street in the so-called Mount of Flowers in Amman (it is just a name that bears no relation to its meaning) bears the name of the Elegant Young Man. The columnist says that as far as he was concerned no such Elegant Young Man ever existed. (He is in fact an old poet.) The columnist, however, says that he was not aware of any elegant achievement by any young man that might have made him worthy of such a great renown. You can have your name, it seems, dubbed or dumped on an Amman street if you know your way in city hall.

But that is not the point which my columnist friend wanted to make it seems. Think, he wrote, what it would be like for someone living in that street to write his or her home address on an aeroplane landing card. And would it not be scandalous for a young woman even to mention the epithet to a male relative?

Again that is not the point. But what he might have wanted to allude to may well be the absence in our lives of a rational relationship between the cause and the effect, the loss of relevancy as it were. That is a cause for worry because it is the main source of "balabala". If you want to know what "balabala" is and you insist, then I must devote the rest of my article to it. One article is perhaps not enough. But I shall do my best to explain it. Etymology is a savour which can make one claim a sense of humour when one does not have any.

Balabala is, to be honest, the kind of disinformation that our ancestors used to create in the ranks of the enemy to force him to retreat. We do not know how to do it any more to others. But we do create it for our own use. It is a kind of disquiet that is made by the right mix of delusion and reality. It makes people "balabala". That is to say, completely confused.

Balabala on the other hand is the plural of "balbul" which is the nightingale. One may well ask: What is the relationship between confusion and singing and is a nightingale considered to be expressing a state of confusion by his singing? That is a very hard question to answer.

I do not wish to stretch my exercise into the political and economic scene lest people say that I am trying to kill them something. For judging by the power of the dinar and the power of its holder, one is not inclined to sell anything, not even ideas. It is better to buy. But I want to point out to the growing number of "balabali" in our daily newspapers. They are the singing columnists who fill the editorial pages and other pages as well. We get no news, but a lot of opinion which creates "balabala". The growing number of columnist is no sign of growing wisdom. It may be a sign of a growing malaise.

Time was, I remember, when my editor gasped when I told him that I prefer to write my column daily instead of every other day. "No one in the world can do it," he said. "Art Buchwald does it every other day," he added, "and the people who write daily columns in America sit on teams of researchers who work all day long to dig up a story. A daily column in a responsible paper is no whimsical affair."

What would my old editor say if he saw that all the old reporters have now become resident pundits, who articulate any idea that may come their way, even the name of a street? But that is the only way up in our present state of things. Reporting holds nothing but trouble and there is no future in it for male journalists. They seem to have abandoned ship and left the female journalists reporting. And the female journalists seem to find less complex than their colleagues to get the bare facts.

Be it as it may, journalism seems to be less elegant than what it was and more eroded. The Elegant Young Man in fact, if resurrected, may well try to join the columnists. My friend will then discover that it is not a big thing to have one's name given to a street. It will be much harder in the future to have it as a byline in a newspaper.

Quake fails to dent Armenian resolve for Nagorno-Karabakh

By John Kampfner
Reuter

YEREVAN, Soviet Union — The earthquake has shattered the lives of hundreds of thousands of Armenians but appears to have done little to destroy their resolve to regain the territory they believe is theirs by right.

If anything, the grief seems to have increased resentment over the Kremlin's tactics to quell the unrest over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

"The people in Moscow hoped the whole thing would be forgotten after the catastrophe. Now they'll see," said a young man, pointing to rows of tanks and troops in Lenin Square in the centre of the Armenian capital.

More than 55,000 people are believed to have died and half a million made homeless by the Dec. 7 earthquake.

About 20,000 troops were deployed immediately in the devastated towns of Leninakan and Spitak — ostensibly to keep order and to prevent unauthorised people from entering areas infected with disease. Nobody has said how long they will stay.

According to Soviet newspapers, more than 150 people have been arrested for looting. Western aid workers said they heard shots fired in Spitak during at least three nights.

Many of several dozen Armenians questioned expressed the view that a more sinister motive was behind the troop movements.

"They're just using the earthquake as an excuse to move troops across Armenia," said one resident of Leninakan, the republic's second city which became a focal point of protest after troops had been moved into Yerevan.

The government has said the troops were sent in "to help the Armenian people in their suffering," noting that 69 soldiers were killed when their plane taking them into Leninakan for relief work crashed on Dec. 11.

More than 60 people have died and thousands have fled their homes in 10 months of ethnic

clashes over Nagorno-Karabakh, populated mostly by Christian Armenians but administered by the neighbouring Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Kremlin ruled in July that Nagorno-Karabakh should stay part of Azerbaijan, which is mainly Muslim. But Moscow pledged to promote the area's Armenian heritage and boost its economy.

Soldiers with automatic rifles, riot shields and water cannon have surrounded Yerevan's Opera Square since demonstrations in February by up to one million people that marked the start of the unrest.

Night curfews are in force in Yerevan and 15 other regions of Armenia, as well as several areas of Azerbaijan.

Since the quake up to 11 members of unofficial Karabakh Committee, which has coordinated the Nagorno-Karabakh campaign, have been arrested. Activists say more than 100 other people have been held in connection with the unrest.

The Moscow leadership has accused the Karabakh Committee of spreading false rumours after disaster.

The arrests and the heavy troop presence have succeeded in stopping public displays of dissent — for the time being.

But one senior Western aid official described the situation as a powder keg and said Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov, who has led the relief operation from Yerevan, knew it.

"Ryzhkov has really pushed his people hard. He knows there are two problems here. Once the effects of the earthquake die down, it's going to really blow up politically," he said.

Until the quake, foreign reporters had been largely barred for months from visiting Armenia to see the communal strife firsthand. Last week several Western photographers and camera teams were briefly detained for filming soldiers.

Armenians showed no reticence to discuss the age-old

Nagorno-Karabakh dispute — their frankness perhaps a reflection of the glasnost or openness policy of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, perhaps of their natural vivacity.

"Whatever Gorbachev thinks, the problem is not going to go away. We'll fight to regain our land, earthquake or no earthquake," said one young man, who like all those questioned asked not to be identified.

Gorbachev toured Armenia shortly after the disaster and said some activists were seeking to exploit human tragedy to achieve their political goals.

One woman who worked at Armenian television said she had seen film of a train arriving in Yerevan from Azerbaijan. Instead of carrying relief supplies, as marked, it had been filled with garbage.

The woman said television authorities in Moscow had forbidden the film to be broadcast.

There was no independent confirmation of her assertions.

Soviet newspapers have, however, given vivid accounts of incidents of ethnic turmoil to show it has not abated since the quake.

The daily Socialist Industry said a convoy of cranes and relief trucks sent from Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, two days after the disaster was attacked by gangs of Armenians armed with sticks and stones.

Some Azeris sent sarcastic telegrams of congratulations on the quake to Armenians, while some Armenians spread rumours that Azeris were responsible for the disaster.

Health Minister Yevgeny Chazov said last week that injured Armenians were not sent to Azerbaijan, despite its proximity to the quake zone, and Azerbaijani doctors were not invited to go to Armenia.



Revived tensions likely following Quebec decision

By Soli Sussman
The Associated Press

TORONTO — A period of renewed tension throughout Canada appears likely as a result of Quebec's refusal to allow English-language signs outdoors.

The new mood comes after four years of general calm between English and French speakers in the country that made it possible for an agreement to be forged in 1987 recognising Quebec as a "distinct society."

The so-called Meech Lake accord would bring Quebec, the only province where French speakers are a majority, back into the federal constitution.

The accord has been ratified by only eight of Canada's 10 provinces, and Monday, Manitoba's premier Gary Filmon said he would no longer push for its approval in the legislature of his Western province because of the Quebec decision.

Filmon said the developments in Quebec were a "national tragedy" and called for a national conference of all Canada's provincial leaders to persuade the French-speaking province to reverse its decision on English signs.

New Brunswick on the Atlantic coast is the other province where ratification is pending.

The issue of which language can be on signs is highly charged and symbolic, considered by French-speakers in Quebec as a

key to preserving their linguistic and cultural heritage.

The supreme court of Canada ruled last week that while Quebec is justified in making sure that French predominates on signs, it cannot prevent languages other than French from being used as well.

In a compromise that has angered English speakers and French militants as well, Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa announced Sunday that outdoor signs still must be only in French while indoor signs can use other languages as long as French is the most visible.

He invoked a rarely used escape hatch that allows the federal or provincial governments to override a court decision.

The population of Quebec, Canada's second-largest province, is 81 per cent French speaking.

The new legislation prevents languages other than French from being used on signs outdoors and in such places as shopping malls and the interior of public transportation facilities.

The Globe and Mail, which bills itself as Canada's national newspaper, said in an editorial Tuesday that Bourassa's decision was a setback whose effects will be felt for years.

"What now? Almost certainly a hardening of hearts, a less generous attitude, an unwillingness to spend precious political capital on bilingualism and francophones, tougher questioning of

the primordiality granted to Quebec's concerns, in sum, a quiet, unspectacular but undeniable backlash that will do us all no good," it said.

Bourassa had campaigned for election in 1985 on a platform that included a softening of linguistic restrictions on signs. His critics say that if he had acted sooner, he could have taken a less severe approach without angering the province's French militants.

A crowd estimated at 9,000 to 17,000 turned out for a rally Sunday in Montreal demanding that no changes be made in the language law.

The language restrictions were imposed under the leadership of the separatist Parti Quebecois in 1977. Power in Quebec shifted from the English minority to the French majority during the 1970s, a tumultuous decade of separatist sentiment that subsided when voters rejected a sovereignty referendum in 1980.

Since then, there has been focus on improved living standards and competitiveness. The province boasted 5 per cent real growth last year and produced 40 per cent of Canada's business administration students.

Quebec's provincial environment minister, Clifford Lincoln, one of four English-speaking members of Bourassa's cabinet, resigned in protest to the sign decision.

"In my belief, rights are rights are rights," he told reporters Tuesday. "There are no partial



Robert Bourassa

rights. There are no indoor-outdoor rights."

Bourassa clearly hoped that the moderate majority of the population would go along with his compromise.

The widely read La Presse of Montreal said in an editorial that the Quebec leader chose "the best compromise under the circumstances." It said either continuing the ban on any language other than French or allowing bilingual signs everywhere "would have been to scorn Quebec reality, both historic and present."

The Meech Lake accord has a June 1990 deadline for ratification by all 10 provinces. Its importance stems from Quebec's refusal to sign the 1982 constitution because it failed to specifically protect its French culture.

In addition to the "distinct society" clause for Quebec, Meech Lake gives provinces new powers in the appointment of supreme court judges and senators and the right to opt out of national shared-cost programmes.

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Egypt's Christians head for desert attracted by monastic life

By Jeffrey Bartholet

WADI NATRUN, Egypt — In Egypt more and more young Christians are heading for the desert to follow a life of self-denial and asceticism.

Leaving families, professions, worldly goods and desires behind, they are donning black robes and pledging obedience only to God, church and the spiritual leader of their chosen hermitage.

"People are running after money for prosperity and they catch nothing — at the end they cannot feel satisfaction — they need more and more and more," said Father John of the St. Macarius monastery in Egypt's western desert.

"For us, we are satisfied and happy and we put all of that under our feet," the bearded monk said.

A disciple of St. Anthony, one of the first known Christian hermits, St. Macarius was said to have a face so full of grace it shone in the dark.

This monastery had only six monks 20 years ago and now it has 100 monks, Father John

said. Father John left his profession as a pharmacist in 1966 to join nine hermits living in remote desert caves about 50 kilometres south of the Fayoum oasis.

The bearded monks, led by Father Matta Al Meskeen, had been living there for seven years. They survived on brackish water from desert springs and food sent by camel from friends in Cairo and Alexandria.

Poisonous snakes were plentiful and passing bedouin often took whatever meagre vegetation the monks managed to grow.

"Although there were all these difficulties, we were very happy under the hand of God," said Father John.

"God protected us from disease, though our intestines were damaged by the water. For me, I felt happier with that life than here."

The Coptic patriarch in Cairo summoned the hermits out of their caves in 1969. He asked them to revive the St. Macarius monastery 92 kilometres northwest of Cairo which was nearly engulfed by the desert.

The monks restored the

monastery, named after a one-time camel-driver who built it and another Christian hermitage in the fourth century.

As the monk spoke, the only other sounds within the monastery walls were a whistling desert wind and the rattling of windows. A few visitors walked quietly in a courtyard nearby.

"This is not an individual movement, but a movement of the Coptic church. It is not happening only in this monastery but in many," he said.

The revival of monastic life reflects a general renaissance in the Coptic Christian church in Egypt where about 90 per cent of the population is Muslim.

The movement parallels an upsurge in Islamic observance. Many Muslims are returning to the ancient principles and traditions of their forebears.

The hermits restored three churches, including one named after 49 monks slaughtered there by berber raiders. In the sands around the monastery they grew olive trees, date palms and vegetables.

Most of the monks are university graduates. Earlier monks

were poorly educated.

"It is a witness to the world...." said Father John of his vocation. "If they see us and see our happiness, we can give them faith and strength."

Bishop Gregorius, a church official in Cairo, said the church does not urge young people to become monks, a prerequisite for becoming a bishop.

"On the contrary, the church says not to be in a hurry to join the monastic life," said Bishop Gregorius. "A man must test himself beforehand. It's not an easy life."

Although St. Macarius monastery has electricity, telephones, cars and modern irrigation equipment, there are no televisions or newspapers.

One monk said the latest news he had heard was about the August floods in Sudan.

The Coptic church celebrates Christmas on January 7 instead of December 25 because of what monks at St. Macarius believe was a Coptic miscalculation some centuries ago.

"We believe that Christ was born in the world — what time is not important," one monk said.



From diapers to the graduation robe Dar Al Tifle Al Arabi takes care of its children till they are able to care for themselves.

Dar Al Tifle, a haven, a home

By Mariam M. Shahin
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The story goes that several days after the Deir Yassin massacre in 1948, several Arab children, the oldest not more than 10 years, were standing in a street corner somewhere between the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Mosque of Omar in the old city of Jerusalem. A passer-by was horrified to see the children and urged them to go home, warning that a war was going on and they would be hurt if they stood in the street. The children promptly told the lady that their parents had been killed and they had no home. They recounted what had happened; after their parents had been killed, the children were loaded on a truck and driven around the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem and stared at as exhibition "pieces", before being dumped in the Arab sector of the city. They were the children of Deir Yassin.

The passer-by was a woman called Hind Hussein, who was running a day-care centre for children prior to the outbreak of war in Palestine. Although all the employees had left and the nursery was closed, Hussein took in a pregnant young widow with four other children that same day. Within a week the two-room day centre that had been built to care for 20 children housed 55.

That's how Hussein, 72, recalls the founding of what came to be called Dar Al Tifle Al Arabi ("The House of the Arab Child").

"Dar Al Tifle Al Arabi was created in the aftermath of the Palestine tragedy in 1948 and more specifically Deir Yassin massacre," she says. "There was a real need for a home for orphaned and needy children, and in some cases we also took in widows who had nowhere to go."

The first few months the centre was in a state of emergency and no-one knew what would happen, Hussein told the Jordan Times in a recent interview. "Two rooms

were not enough for all these people. At first I thought they would decrease in number, instead they only increased."

Initially there were two people running the whole show. Hussein contacted the city council, informed them of the situation and sought help. "They agreed, but they were in such a disarray at the time that if we had waited for them to act, half the kids would probably have starved," Hussein recalls. "We started collecting private funds. The Convent of the Sisters of Zion took us in for two months before I could arrange for more suitable lodgings."

In the beginning of 1949, a three-member board of trustees was formed and it was decided that the centre would use the house of Hind Hussein's grandfather Mohammed Saleh Hussein. "We decided to call the house Dar Al Tifle Al Arabi then," she said. "It was next door to the American colony and spacious enough for our needs."

Expansion

Since then Dar Al Tifle never looked back. It grew every year and now houses and schools over 1,200 children and employs 146 men and women. Its role as an educational institution began in the 1950s. Initially it offered education only on a primary school level. Today it offers an acknowledged university programme which consists of a bachelor's degree in social work, Arabic and English.

"Initially we sent our children to public schools, but I felt that our children — many of them orphans or have only one parent — did not receive sufficient personal, specialised attention," Hussein recounts. "Our children are different from others in that they are growing up under more difficult circumstances than other children. They need more personalised attention. I believe that our staff are continually being trained and updated on the latest developments in specialised forms of education and better equipped to teach our children

and give them a more substantial education than they would otherwise receive in public schools."

Of the 1,200 children who attend Dar Al Tifle, only 300 actually live there. The centre gives priority to orphans, then those whose mothers are dead, then those who have no father. Some of the women who work in Dar Al Tifle are widows who come with their children. "We house them, employ the mother and educate the children," says Hussein. "Most importantly, we teach them to be self-sufficient. They often move out to buy their own small house in their home villages and are quite successful," adds Hussein, who, despite her age, is more energetic than most middle aged women when dealing with children.

Many of the centre's non-resident students come from broken homes and are just as much in need of some extra attention as others since many of them have parents who are physically or mentally ill.

Handicapped and blind

In the 1950s, there was no institution for the blind and the physically handicapped in what came to be known as the West Bank. "We took in anybody and everybody who could not take care of themselves," Hussein says. "People came from the camps, villages, towns and cities. We set up special classes in braille and hired teachers to help the physically handicapped. Gradually, specialised institutions opened and our students went there."

Even today, Dar Al Tifle accepts blind and physically handicapped children who cannot be placed in other specialised institutions.

Hussein is highly enthusiastic when explaining the centre's motivations. "Our motto at Dar Al Tifle is normalcy. We attempt to create the most normal environment that we can for our children. We discourage children becoming boarders unless it is absolutely

necessary. We are also against creating separate classes for the physically handicapped, the blind, or the slow learners. Although these children have specific needs, we believe they can become stronger and gain self-confidence only in a natural environment, where although they are different they can learn to cope and accept each other's differences. The strong should help and teach the weaker and the weaker will learn to appreciate their more gifted classmates and accept them as comrades not as superiors."

The centre has not been spared from the one-year-old Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories.

A Western journalist who recently visited the West Bank, told the Jordan Times: "The school has dealt with the social realities of the Intifada quite well. They have had tear-gas bombs thrown in their courtyard and the army busting into the classrooms on several occasions."

"The teachers and officials are trying to keep activities at a low key basically because they are one of the few educational institutions still open and they don't want to give the Israeli authorities any excuse to close them down."

According to informed sources, Dar Al Tifle is busy supporting many non-resident students and families. The sources say that 200 families whose wage earners were killed or are imprisoned in the uprising, survive solely from what they receive from the House of the Arab Child.

Hind Hussein points out that Dar Al Tifle is funded "solely by the generous contributions of private individuals and institutions, whose names are registered for public record on placards in the main hall of our school, unless otherwise requested."

"We can definitely use more contributions," she said. "We maintain our account at the Arab Bank in Amman and our account number is 5009-1/700."

Christmas at the Equator

By Kenneth L. Whiting
The Associated Press

SINGAPORE — Most Singaporeans have never seen snow, let alone a reindeer. But "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas" and "Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer" have been broadcast staples for weeks in this steamy tropical nation.

Only about 200,000 of the 2.6 million people in this island republic professed to being Christians in the 1980 census. But apart from the country's independence day holiday in August, no other period comes as close to being celebrated by the entire population.

Illuminated trumpets, silver bells, angels, candles, fir trees, snowflakes, reindeer, lanterns, yule logs, fairy lights and other glitter adorn shopping centres and hotels along Orchard road to Singapore's commercial centre.

Street vendors in T-shirts and shorts sell roasted chestnuts. The Centrepoint shopping centre spent 400,000 dollars (\$207,000) on a fairytale Christmas theme, decorating its building as a medieval castle.

All this in a land 135 kilometres north of the Equator where the

average daily temperature is 27 C year-round.

The observance of Christmas, a British colonial import, appears to have intensified in recent years among a population that is 76 per cent Chinese, 15 per cent Malay and 6 per cent Indian.

It blends Western trimmings with an Oriental flavour. Roast turkey with the usual stuffing is available, but so are a variety of other dishes based on turkey, including curry turkey and turkey noodles.

"Parties are moving away from the ballrooms of hotels right into the streets this year," said a tip in one newspaper. "Your Christmas Dior evening gown just won't do. Neither will your scruffy pair of shorts and old T-shirt. Something smart but casual is what you want. Rough loose jackets, bright polo shirts and enticing minis are possible options."

The "singing Christmas tree," a multicoloured stage in the shape of a tree for a choir from the Trinity Christian Centre, has been a yuletide feature in recent years. In 1986, 27 men and women carolled their way into the Guinness book of world records by singing for more than 74 hours, ending at 1:05 on Christmas



The joy of Christmas!

morning. A few stores won't have Santas because, in the words of one merchant, "it is hard to find a suitable candidate." But Robinson's department store flew in a man from Finland who, spokes-

woman Lena Phua insisted, is "the real Santa."

While his birth certificate identifies him as Saastamoinen Sampo, the resident of Rovaniemi in Lapland is the real thing, she said.

Jordan and W Germany Thirty years of cooperation

By Marianne Leib

HANNOVER (INP) — "Jordan has engaged in close cooperation with the Federal Republic of the Geosciences and Raw Materials (BGR) in Hannover for thirty years already," says Ibrahim Ababneh. The 35-year-old engineer of mining isn't the first expert either to come from the Hashemite Kingdom to Hannover for advanced instruction and information with a fellowship of the Federal Republic of Germany.

As part of the development cooperation efforts of the German Federal Government, the BGR was involved in 34 projects in 29 nations in 1987, including Jordan. Mineralogy and deposit exploration technology are important elements in the course of instruction prepared for Ibrahim Ababneh and his friends and colleagues from many nations. Since May this year, they have pursued a programme of learning that blends outings for conducting geochemical fieldwork and calibration efforts with analyses of the data and probes collected at the lab in Hannover.

They've visited operational and defunct mines and caves in the Harz Mountains near Hannover as well as the Continental Crust Drilling Project at Windischchenbach (in Bavaria's Upper

Palatinate district), where engineers are preparing to drill the "world's deepest hole." Plans call for the drill-bits to reach a depth of about 14,000 metres below the surface of the earth by the early nineties.

In Amman, Ibrahim Ababneh works at the National Resources Authority, a part of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources. His work there had already brought him into contact with German colleagues collecting samplings from Jordanian shale deposits prior to his trip to the Federal Republic of Germany. German experts are confidently awaiting the analysis of the Jordanian shale samplings, which, according to preliminary studies, belong to deposits that contain more petroleum than all the oil deposits of the entire Federal Republic of Germany.

When Ibrahim Ababneh looks back on all the impressions and experiences he's had in the Federal Republic since December 1987, he comes to a happy conclusion: "I've been able to augment my knowledge in the field of geochemistry optimally." When he returns home to his job in December 1988, he'll once again have more time for his favourite pastime, football. In Hannover, he was so busy that television proved to be his main link to the game.

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Midland Bank 'donates' all Sudanese debt to UNICEF

LONDON (R) — An agreement under which Britain's fourth biggest commercial bank is donating all of its Sudanese debt to a U.N. relief agency could herald a wave of swaps to reduce Third World debt, analysts and aid officials say.

The world's poorest nations are overwhelmed by foreign obligations and have little hope of obtaining new loans for desperately needed investment for development projects.

Under the agreement by Midland Bank Plc, the Sudanese government will exchange the debt, with a face value of \$800,000, for local currency which will provide such investment.

The money will finance a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) development programme in Sudan's drought-stricken central Kordofan area.

Through its contribution to one of the world's poorest countries, Midland made a public gesture of goodwill while at the same time divesting itself of nearly worthless

paper for which it had already set aside provisions from its profits. "This is significant because Midland is the first bank in Britain, and one of the first in the world, to be willing to donate debt," said David Kline, president of the U.S.-based Fund for Private Assistance in International Development.

Banks have previously used debt swaps to exchange loans for equity in developing countries' enterprises, but Midland's innovative donation could inspire a host of new conversions. These would finance development schemes in nations without an equity market and too poor to repay their debt, analysts said.

"Sudanese debt is almost impossible to collect," said Kline,

whose organisation acts as intermediary in non-profit aid plans.

Sudan, which has \$12 billion of foreign debt, owes arrears of \$1 billion to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), more than any other nation.

In 1986 the Washington-based IMF declared it ineligible for new credits.

"What else can you do with Sudanese debt?" asked Salomon Brothers analyst William Vincent, commenting on the transaction.

Sudan's paper is hardly ever traded in the secondary market for Third World debt, and dealers assessed its value at five cents on the dollar.

Midland's loan will be redeemed by the Sudanese government at a discount, which both the bank and UNICEF declined to disclose. UNICEF will use the proceeds to provide boreholes, handpumps and latrines to some 5,000 villagers in Kordofan.

UNICEF, which approached

Midland with the idea, is keen to close more such deals, said UNICEF director in Britain Robert Smith.

He said he could not comment on the discount because that could prejudice negotiations with other debtor countries.

A UNICEF spokeswoman said talks were under way with several other countries.

Although Midland's is the first donation of debt to finance a development project, last year saw a spate of environment-related gifts. The groundwork was laid in July, 1987, by a plan to ensure the protection of a stretch of Bolivian rain forest.

Under the agreement, Citicorp bought \$650,000 of Bolivian debt at an 85 per cent discount with funds provided by a private donor. The paper was then returned through an intermediary to the Bolivian government, which undertook in return to preserve 3.7 million acres (1.5 million hectares) of forest as a nature reserve.

To lessen political dangers

Experts urge serious measures to produce totally-Arab bread

ABU DHABI (OPECNA) — Arab food experts, warning that one-third of the Arab World's population could starve by the year 2000, have called for large-scale ventures to lessen "politically dangerous" reliance on foreign food imports.

Ending a three-day conference on food security here, experts from the 21-member Arab League also urged their governments to provide full encouragement to agriculture and food industries.

They also called for the creation of a "strategic grain reserve" to deal with natural and economic emergencies.

The experts, acknowledging that these were only short-term solutions to the growing threat of increased reliance on foreign imports, said governments, development funds and private investors should join hands in making better use of the immense potential of the Arab World.

"Arab states should take serious measures to produce a loaf of bread that is totally Arab, because this represented the safety valve for food security," one of the recommendations said.

UAE Economy and Commerce Minister Saif Al Jarwan told the conference that seven out of ten loafs of bread were imported

from abroad and warned of the political implications of such heavy reliance on foreign imports.

With a population of nearly 200 million, the Arab Nation is considered the world's largest food importer and experts estimate the 1987 food import bill at \$25 billion.

But the experts warn that this could increase several times due to population growth, inflation and industrialisation, and have urged short, medium and long-term measures to institute a broad-based and efficient food industry.

According to a paper presented by the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry, cosponsors of the conference, the Arab population will reach some 250 million by the year 2000.

Unless a reversal of this trend emerges, "one-third of the Arab population would starve by then," the paper warned.

The conference recommended the establishment of a joint Arab bank with branches in the 21 Arab League states to finance import-export activities throughout the Arab World and to provide funds and loans to farmers and investors in the food industry.

Gulf Arab states delay customs union

BAHRAIN (R) — Six Gulf Arab states have decided to delay the introduction of an agreement on customs duties on imports by another year, a Gulf minister said Thursday.

Bahraini Foreign Minister Mohammad Ibn Mubarak Al Khalifa told reporters at the end of a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit that the customs pact was an obstacle to the establishment of a common market between GCC states.

"We have decided to give it another period of one year to implement this clause," he said.

The unified custom tariffs accord was originally due to take effect between the GCC states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in 1987. But a GCC summit in Abu Dhabi extended that deadline until early 1989.

Sheikh Mohammad said he hoped the pact — part of a 1981 plan to integrate GCC economies — would be implemented in December 1989.

GCC states import most of their goods from Europe, the Far East and the United States.

A communiqué issued Thursday at the end of the annual summit said the alliance had approved schemes to protect local products from foreign competi-

tion and encourage its industries.

Other measures to promote Gulf economic integration included a plan to give GCC citizens equal taxes and the right to own shares in all member states. A plan to provide refined oil products to each country in emergencies was also approved.

"The council looks with confidence to the next stage... to gradually implement more items of the agreement to positively support the joint Gulf market and push forward the wheel of economic development in member states," the statement said.

Cheysson says trade deal with GCC to be priority next year

Meanwhile, a trade deal between the European Community (EC) and the GCC will be a priority for the next European Commission, outgoing Commissioner Claude Cheysson said Thursday.

But the deal would have to include safeguards to protect the GCC's nascent industries as well as the EC's petrochemical industries, Cheysson, who is commissioner in charge of relations with Mediterranean states and Latin America, told Reuters in Brussels.

"The commission felt the agreement was so important that

it was not fair to negotiate it during our last few days," Cheysson said. "It will be a priority for the new commission."

The new commission — a 17-strong executive in charge of day-to-day running of the Community — takes over on Jan. 1.

"The agreement should be reciprocal, but it's important it doesn't cause serious trouble to vulnerable industries," Cheysson said.

Last year the Community had a trade surplus of 2.6 billion ECUs (\$3.1 billion) with the GCC.

AMMAN EXCHANGE RATES

Thursday Dec. 22, 1988					
Central Bank official rates					
	Buy	Sell	French franc	78.3	78.7
U.S. dollar	474.0	476.0	Japanese yen (for 100)	380.4	382.3
British pound	855.5	859.8	Dutch guilder	237.0	238.2
Deutsche mark	267.7	269.0	Swedish crown	77.4	77.8
Swiss franc	316.8	318.4	Italian lire (for 100)	36.4	36.7
			Belgian franc (for 10)	127.9	128.5

Amman Financial Market weekly trading

Following is a summary of trading during last week and the previous week:			
	Dec. 17-21	Dec. 10-14	
Daily average	JD 682,102	JD 519,118	
Total volume	JD 3,410,514	JD 2,595,588	
Total shares	2,587,763	1,966,882	
No. of contracts	2,780	2,110	
Sectoral trading:			
Industrial	JD 1,684,313 (49.4%)	JD 3,338,004 (51.6%)	
Financial	JD 1,458,294 (42.8%)	JD 1,074,417 (41.4%)	
Service	(5.8%)	(5.0%)	
Insurance	(2.0%)	(2.0%)	
Share price index	125.9	125.0	
No. of companies	73	73	
Price movement (rise)	51	21	
(decline)	14	42	
(stable)	8	10	

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midday on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Friday.			
One Sterling	1.7980/8010	U.S. dollar	
One U.S. dollar	1.1950/80	Canadian dollar	
	1.7765/80	Deutsche mark	
	2.0035/55	Dutch guilders	
	1.4970/90	Swiss francs	
	37.08/20	Belgian francs	
	6.0500/700	French francs	
	1305/1307	Italian lire	
	124.55/75	Japanese yen	
	6.1270/370	Swedish crowns	
	6.5550/650	Norwegian crowns	
	6.8600/700	Danish crowns	
One ounce of gold	417.50/418.00	U.S. dollars	

WORLD STOCK MARKETS

SYDNEY — Stocks closed steady after late selling nullified earlier rises as the market closed early for Christmas. The All Ordinaries Index eased 0.2 to 1,484.1.

TOKYO — Shares were easier on profit-taking after three days of gains. The Nikkei Index fell 88.35 to 29,686.26.

HONG KONG — Stocks closed higher after a few players boosted portfolios to end the year on a high note. The Hang Seng Index rose 13.86 to 2,656.59.

SINGAPORE — Local investors pushed up both prices and volume, though foreign investors were mostly absent. The Straits Times Industrial Index rose 8.68 to 1,024.82.

BOMBAY — Prices recovered after renewed buying by state institutions spurred speculative support, but dealers said the uptrend was restrained by the coming Christmas holiday. The market will be closed until Jan. 2.

FRANKFURT — Strong foreign interest in Volkswagen enlivened otherwise quiet pre-Christmas trading, pushing shares to a higher close. The DAX index rose 4.31 to 1,328.46.

ZURICH — Shares finished quietly steady, with little news to affect the market before the Christmas break. The Swiss Index rose 2.4 to 926.2.

PARIS — Prices extended gains in active midday trading. There was strong buying of industrials as less speculative stocks caught up with recent rises for more volatile movers.

LONDON — Shares closed firm in sluggish pre-holiday trading, buoyed by U.K. balance of payments data for November which was much as expected. The FTSE 100 share index closed 5.3 points higher at a day's high of 1,774.

NEW YORK — Stocks gained in early trading, with blue chips moderately higher. But traders said thin volume may have exaggerated the effect of light early buy orders. The Dow was up six at 2,166.

Santa only visits the rich

Christmas in Lebanon is forgotten season

BEIRUT (R) — Santa Claus only visits the rich in Lebanon.

For the affluent, the trappings of Christmas are readily available: expensive jewellery, haute couture fashion, caviar, French champagne...

For the majority, Christmas is a forgotten season. There is not even window shopping on offer and parents have run out of excuses to explain the non-arrival of Santa Claus.

Instead of the glitter of tinsel and festive gifts, more than 15 years of ruinous civil war have left blackened shop windows on bombed-out streets.

"It is a white Christmas only on Lebanon's snow-covered mountains. Otherwise it is a sombre and dark season this year," said Robin Mannock, a veteran British correspondent based in Beirut.

Lebanon is a land with two rival governments, no president, a divided army and feuding mili-

tias vying for power.

"Instead of exchanging gifts, we are trading bombs, killing and driving each other from our homes. How can we cheer up for the feast when our country is slipping away from us?" said Kamal Rubiez, the mayor of Ras Beirut.

"The season is normally associated with gifts, family reunions, peace of mind, warmth, security and joy, but all these are missing now," said Elias Baroudi, an economist.

The civil war has killed 130,000 people, maimed thousands and displaced a million others. At least half a million have emigrated, while other families are separated by checkpoints and barricades.

Rubiez recalled the pre-war days when Christmas turned fashionable Hamra Street and central Beirut into a glittering festive arena animated by foreign art groups and the latest

Hollywood films.

"The merry mood of Christmas could be seen in the sparkling eyes of people shopping, sitting in street cafes, restaurants, and lining up at movie theatres," said Samir Rubiez, an architect living in west Beirut.

The once-gleaming streets are now reduced to the ghost of Christmas-past. The Hamra strip is deserted — the roar of emergency power generators replacing the voices of the carollers of old.

But for some, especially in east Beirut, there is another side of Christmas.

Well-off Lebanese who have developed a taste for expensive imported goods still satisfy their needs for French wines, caviar, smoked salmon, oysters, mussels, turkeys, champagne, sweets and cakes at luxurious supermarkets.

The renowned Lebanese Tabah jewellers have designed special gift articles for Christmas, manufactured at their factory in Monte Carlo, with prices of up to \$12,300.

For fashionable and rich Lebanese women, the latest French and Italian designs are available at the high-priced shops in Kaslik shopping centre in east Beirut.

Only few miles south of Kaslik, Christmas is a forgotten season for Lebanese refugees displaced when civil war broke out in 1975.

"I spend Christmas alone with no husband, no children and no relatives. I just sit there and remember. Memories are nicer than these agonising days," said widow Salma Nassar.

She has been living in a two-room shabby concrete house since 1975 when she and hundreds of others were forced from the southern town of Damour by militiamen.

"Now the only thing we share is poverty," said mother-of-five Mantoura Abu Miri, amid a few tattered Christmas decorations on the walls of a leaking house.

Seven-year-old Ritta Abu Mousa was told that Santa Claus forgot to bring her a present last year because she did not give him her name.

"But this year, I went to church and wrote down my name so he won't forget me," she said. But she spoke more with hope than with expectation.

GEC, CGE to form joint venture

LONDON (AP) — General Electric Co. PLC (GEC) of Britain and France's Compagnie Generale d'Electricite (CGE) have announced Thursday they have agreed to merge their worldwide operations into a joint venture.

GEC's Power Systems Group and CGE's subsidiary Alstom will combine to become Europe's

largest power engineering business, said an announcement to the London Stock Exchange.

It said the joint company's activities will encompass the development, production and marketing of equipment in power generation, electricity distribution and transmission, rail transport, in-

dustrial automation and related fields.

The new venture is expected to have sales of more than \$4 billion (\$7 billion), more than half of them outside Britain and France, and net assets of about \$8 billion (\$14.5 billion) and more than 85,000 employees.

Top Polish economist warns of unrest

WARSAW (R) — Communist Party economic chief Wladyslaw Baka says Polish authorities face a danger of unrest because of their economic failures and might have to impose a wages and prices freeze.

Baka, a member of the ruling Politburo, said in a speech to the party's policy-making central

committee that the party had not improved the lot of worker and that the social atmosphere was getting worse.

"In the fields which mainly affect the fulfilment of workers' needs and the social atmosphere, there is not only no improvement but the dangers are increasing all the time," he told the 230-member central committee.

"Firstly, I mean market shortages, secondly inflation and thirdly housing shortages," he said.

His comments made clear economic reforms had not been a quick success. The government says annual inflation is 60 per cent but some official bodies say it will reach 100 per cent by next month.

Baka said the state budget de-

ficit in 1989 would be a record one trillion zlotys (\$2 billion), and that supplies of goods were too low, banknotes were being issued too fast and the value of the Polish currency was absurdly low.

He demanded cuts in government spending and an increase in market supplies. He announced a four per cent cut in defence spending in 1989 and called for a reversal of a Politburo decision last autumn not to adopt a price and wage freeze.

"We abandoned our plans to partially freeze prices and wages. But time has shown that there were no better methods and the situation is getting worse every month," Baka said.

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For admission to MBBS/BDOS course a candidate must have taken biology, physics, chemistry and for engineering course physics, chemistry and mathematics and a pass in English in Tawjilhi examination.

Gandhi ends China visit on high note

PEKING (AP) — Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India Friday ended a visit to China with the two nations expressing a common desire to improve ties after nearly three decades of relations strained by territorial dispute.

Gandhi, accompanied by his wife, Sonia, departed for home from Shanghai after his five-day visit, the first by an Indian head of government since his grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru, visited in 1954.

Both sides said the visit ushered in a new era of good will between the world's most populous nations. Gandhi said his trip marked a "new beginning" for the two countries.

The countries agreed to set up a joint working group to take up their most divisive issue, a territorial dispute that broke out into a short border war in 1962.

"The leaders of the two countries held earnest, in-depth discussions on the Indian-China boundary question and agreed to settle this question through peaceful and friendly consultations," a joint communique said.

"They also agreed to develop their relations actively in other fields and work hard to create a favourable climate and conditions for a fair and reasonable settlement of the boundary question."

It said Gandhi's talks with Chinese Premier Li Peng were held "in an atmosphere of friendship, candour and mutual understanding." Gandhi also met with senior leader Deng Xiaoping, Communist Party head Zhao Ziyang and President Yang Shangkun.

The border issue, Gandhi said, is "very complicated" and a quick solution is unlikely.

Asian and Western diplomats said the Gandhi visit would let the two sides prevent the border dispute from impeding an improvement in ties and focus on economic development.

"Both China and India want to

be able to shift scarce resources away from defence and into economic development," said an Asian diplomat. "This helps them do it."

China claims 90,000 square kilometres of mountainous frontier in what New Delhi says is northeast India's Arunachal Pradesh province. India says China illegally occupied 36,000 square kilometres on its western border.

The communique said China "expressed concern over anti-China activities by some Tibetan elements in India," and that the Indian side repeated its policy of recognising Tibet as a part of China and banning Tibetans from carrying out anti-Chinese political activities in Indian soil.

India has been the home of Tibet's religious leader, the Dalai Lama, and thousands of his followers who fled Tibet after an abortive anti-Chinese uprising in 1959. China blames supporters of the Dalai Lama for pro-independence activities that have led to violent clashes with police the past 14 months.



Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and his wife Sonia visit the Great Wall of China.

Provincial row lingers despite Bhutto moves

ISLAMABAD (R) — A caretaker chief minister has taken control in Pakistan's Baluchistan province but opposition leaders say Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's first domestic political crisis sparked by the dissolution of the provincial assembly was not yet over.

Officials said Justice Kudha Baksh Marri was sworn in Thursday as acting chief minister by Baluchistan Governor Mohammad Musa. A five-member cabinet was due to take office Friday.

Musa dissolved the provincial legislature Dec. 15, acting on the advice of then Chief Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali which the governor was constitutionally bound to follow.

Baluchistan is the largest but least populated of Pakistan's four provinces.

Political analysts said the dissolution only two weeks after Bhutto became premier had saved Jamali, who headed a coalition including her Pakistan People's Party (PPP), from losing a

vote of confidence.

Bhutto, whose party won general elections Nov. 16, has denied opposition accusations she conspired to keep an ally in power and challenged them to take the issue to court or face elections within 90 days.

Opposition leaders are divided on how best to tackle the problem and some who have held talks with Bhutto this week said she shared their desire for a solution.

"We have not yet reached a consensus to wriggle out of the crisis but we are continually trying to find a respectable solution," said Fazlur Rehman, leader of the Jamiat Ulama-i-Islam party.

Other opposition leaders say either the dissolution must be undone by a constitutional amendment by parliament or the government should take the matter to court.

A spokesman for the main opposition Islamic Democratic Alliance (IDA) said: "There is no shift in our stand."

All passengers survive Philippine ferry blaze

MANILA (Agencies) — All 128 people on board a blazing Philippine inter-island ferry were rescued Friday hours after the vessel caught fire when fireworks in the cargo hold exploded, a spokesman for the owners said.

Francisco Malliong, attorney for the Gothong Carlos Lines, told reporters no one died but an elderly woman suffered severe burns from the fire that gutted the 1,400-ton Dona Conchita.

Earlier, another spokesman for the ship's owner said the woman had died as the others jumped into the water and clung to life rafts.

Malliong said the ship was still burning as its crew failed to contain the fire. "We are expecting it (the vessel) to be a total loss," he added.

Spokesman Bob Gothong earlier said the fire was apparently started by some fireworks stored illegally in the hold. Firecrackers are prohibited inside ferries.

The Dona Conchita left Manila late Wednesday with about 1,100 passengers bound for New Washington, Palompon and Cebu City, Gothong said. He said most disembarked at New Washington and a few went aboard at the

Panay Island port.

It was the latest in a series of accidents involving passenger vessels in this archipelago nation of 7,100 islands. Previous accidents have raised calls in the Philippine congress and the press for a crackdown on safety violations by inter-island shipping companies.

The Dona Conchita was bound for Leyte Island when it caught fire three hours after it left New Washington at 1800 GMT Thursday, officials said.

Olivo de Villa, 47, said he was sleeping in the Dona Conchita when the fire began. He said he helped put lifejackets on a child and two relatives with whom he was travelling and then jumped into the Sibuyan Sea.

"I saw thick smoke," he said. "There were several explosions, so I jumped into the sea. I don't know what caused the explosion. We were the very first to jump into the water." He said he and other were fished out by three small pumpboats.

Lacking the necessary firefighting equipment in the area, the coast guard said they would likely have to let the fire burn itself out.

New White House choices rile some, appease some

WASHINGTON (R) — President-elect George Bush, in a political declaration of independence, has made clear that interest groups that backed his candidacy do not have a veto policy over his personnel and policy decisions.

Snubbing anti-abortion groups that supported him in the Nov. 8 election, Bush named black physician Louis Sullivan Thursday to be his secretary of health and human services.

He also picked Chicago public transit official Samuel Skinner to be transportation secretary, selected retiring Congressman Manuel Lujan to be interior secretary, named Under-Secretary of State Edward Derwinsky to head the new Department of Veterans Affairs, and selected conservative William Reilly to direct the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Sullivan, president of Morehouse School of Medicine, has been under fire by anti-abortion groups since he was quoted by an Atlanta newspaper as backing women's right to an abortion.

"The appointment would be a direct slap in the face to the millions of anti-abortion voters — many of them Democrats — who backed Bush in overwhelming numbers on November 8," the Ad Hoc Committee in Defence of Life said earlier this week.

On Thursday, Sullivan told reporters that he opposed abortion except in cases of rape, incest or when the life of the mother was at stake.

By naming Sullivan, the first black in his cabinet, Bush signalled his desire to woo black voters that overwhelmingly backed Democrat Michael Dukakis, Bush, who got 10 per cent of the black vote, has held out the olive branch in a series of post-election meetings with civil rights leaders.

The choice of Conservation Foundation President Reilly to administer EPA represented a gesture to environmentalists, who opinion polls show went heavily for Dukakis last month.

National Audubon Society Vice-President Brock Evans called Reilly "solid middle-of-the-road guy" who is "well respected" by environmentalists.

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Bush to push bid to topple Noriega

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect George Bush has pledged to pursue President Ronald Reagan's policy of seeking the removal of Manuel Antonio Noriega from power in Panama.

"Our policy will be that Noriega must go. There should be no misunderstanding about our policy," Bush told Eric Arturo Delvalle, the ousted president whom the United States continues to recognise as Panama's legitimate leader.

The vice president's words were relayed to reporters by White House spokesman Martin Fitzwater after Bush met privately with Reagan, Delvalle and National Security Adviser Colin L. Powell.

Fitzwater said Delvalle requested the meeting because of "rumours and unfounded stories in Panama of a change in U.S. policy."

"He was looking for assurance of steadfastness," the spokesman said.

Delvalle has lived in hiding in Panama since being deposed last February by forces loyal to Noriega, who was indicted on drug-smuggling charges by two federal grand juries in Florida earlier this year.

Fitzwater said Delvalle did not suggest any changes in policy and there was no discussion of relaxing the economic sanctions that the United States has applied against the Noriega-run government.

Fitzwater said there was no discussion of the possibility of Delvalle resigning and no discussion of possible U.S. military action. As to the latter possibility, he would say only, "We don't discuss military options."

On Wednesday, State Department spokeswoman Phyllis Oakley appeared to rule out U.S. military force to depose Noriega, saying that "Panama's political crisis can be resolved only by Panamanians."

Fitzwater said Reagan commended Delvalle's courage and patriotism and promised his continued support. He said Delvalle thanked the president and vice president for their backing.

The spokesman described the meeting, which lasted about 15 minutes, as "a general discussion of where we go from here."

Delvalle met Wednesday afternoon with Secretary of State George Shultz shortly after his arrival from Panama aboard a U.S. military jet. Neither spoke to reporters after the meeting.



Manuel Antonio Noriega

The Washington Post reported on Thursday's editions that, during a meeting in Panama City last week with William J. Crowe, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Delvalle threatened to give up his struggle against Noriega unless the United States came up with a specific plan to remove him.

The Post said that according to notes of the secret meeting provided by a source, Delvalle said he saw no reason to continue making personal "sacrifices" without a specific plan of action to remove Noriega.

The newspaper said the Dec. 11 meeting also was attended by U.S. Ambassador to Panama Arthur Davis and the commander of the U.S. military's southern command, Fred F. Wornat.

SAS and IRA fight a 'dirty war' in N. Ireland

By Paul Majendie Reuters

BELFAST — With a frontline force of about 250, Irish Republican Army (IRA) gunmen constantly harry 10,000 British soldiers in a guerrilla war that both sides concede is unwinnable.

Behind the lines in Northern Ireland, British commandos working undercover in the elite Special Air Service (SAS) instil a paranoid fear in their enemies with a combination of painstaking surveillance and devastating firepower.

In the cloak and dagger world of this 20-year-old "dirty war," the two main undercover protagonists have developed a healthy respect for each other's deadly skills.

All this emerges in a new book by a trio of journalists on Britain's Sunday Times called "Ambush — The War between the SAS and the IRA."

Defence correspondent and co-author James Adams, reviewing a conflict that has killed almost 3,000 people and

maimed 30,000 so far, said: "There will never be a military victory... there are no military commanders who believe the war is winnable."

Estimating the total SAS force in Northern Ireland at no more than 60, he said in an interview: "They are very, very few in numbers and yet the IRA sees them everywhere."

As for the SAS itself: "they have a great deal of respect for the IRA as terrorists."

Northern Ireland hit world headlines in 1969 when Catholics, who form a minority there, staged civil rights marches to call for better housing, jobs and education.

When the Protestant backlash came, the IRA were poorly prepared, badly armed and dismissed by Catholics who viewed them as toy gun romantics and dubbed them the "I Ran Aways."

Today the Irish Republican Army ranks as one of the best armed, trained and financed guerrilla forces in the world.

Massive growth The authors estimate that the IRA has become an international underground corporation with annual profits of about £7 million (\$12.5 million) from protection rackets, illegal drinking clubs, robbery, smuggling, unlicensed taxis and donations.

"The IRA has, in purely financial terms, become the most successful business in Ireland and would qualify, so the joke goes, for a queen's award for industry," they note.

Recruitment is never a problem for its active service units whose members are paid a weekly allowance of £10 (\$18), double that if they are married.

The angry young men who joined the ranks in 1969 make up the hardcore of volunteers. New recruits are carefully nurtured through the ranks in a tight chain of command. Those freed from jail are speedily rehabilitated.

The IRA are acknowledged masters of propaganda, quick to publicise their cause and damn their British foes where-

ver possible.

SAS history By its very nature, the SAS shuns publicity, cloaking its operations in secrecy and retiring faceless back into the shadows even after winning worldwide renown in 1980 with the storming of the Iranian embassy in London to free hostages.

It was set up in 1941 to strike deep behind German lines during World War II. After the war, it fulfilled a counter-insurgency role in Malaya, Oman, Brunei, Borneo and Aden.

At the SAS "killing house" at its British base in Hereford, special project teams are trained in hostage rescues. Their computerised database is packed with logistical information on key buildings that are potential targets.

Counter-terrorist expertise is swapped with Delta Force in the United States and GSG9 in West Germany.

The bloodiest clash between the IRA and the SAS took place in the sleepy little Northern Ireland village of Loughgall

In May 1987 when eight IRA gunmen shot dead trying to attack the local police station.

In March 1988, SAS commandos shot dead three unarmed IRA guerrillas on an abortive bombing mission in the British rock colony of Gibraltar. A jury at an inquest there decided it was lawful killing.

The authors agree that SAS commandos have to walk a tightrope between heroism and villainy in a murky world of undercover clashes where split-second decisions are vital and mistakes can happen.

Adams rejected shoot-to-kill allegations and said: "The SAS are drilled so carefully about operating within the rule of law."

The book, looking forward on a sombre note, concludes: "The battle to come between the IRA and the SAS and security forces will be ferocious and unrelenting."

"No one is in any doubt that there are greater atrocities and more bloody encounters on the horizon."

COLUMN

All-nude exhibition opens in Peking

PEKING (AP) — Thousands of people packed into China's top art gallery Thursday for the opening of Peking's first painting exhibition devoted entirely to the study of nudes. Poets, top government officials, schoolchildren, young couples and workers gathered around the paintings by some of China's best artists. Some shook their heads in disbelief at the nudes before them. Others leered lasciviously. Still more gazed with obvious appreciation. "I feel this exhibition shows we have achieved a little more freedom. In the past, you would never see this," said Wang Xing, a 22-year-old student.

Myerson acquitted in divorce-fixing case

NEW YORK (R) — Bess Myerson, a former Miss America, New York City official and friend of Mayor Ed Koch, was acquitted Thursday of charges she bribed a judge to fix her lover's divorce case. The jury also acquitted her boyfriend and co-defendant Carl Capasso — a millionaire sewer-

contractor currently serving a three-year term for tax evasion — and former New York State Supreme Court Justice Hostense Gabel. As the final not-guilty verdict of the six count indictment was read out, clearing Myerson of obstruction of justice, the 64-year-old former city consumer affairs and cultural affairs commissioner hugged her attorney. The government sought to prove in the trial that Myerson gave Judge Gabel's daughter, Sukhreet, a \$19,000-a-year job as her assistant in return for reduced support and alimony payments to Capasso's former wife Nancy.

Myerson said she was "relieved" and "blasted out" of the courtroom. She said the trial was "a waste of time" and "a waste of money."

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